

**PARISH LEADERSHIP IN TRANSITION:
EXPLORING MODELS OF PARTNERSHIP,
INCLUSIVITY AND COLLABORATION**

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the Faculty of
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**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry**

**by
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ABSTRACT

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by

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As the Third Millennium dawns, people are aware that the traditional patriarchal and hierarchical model of parish leadership no longer adequately serves the needs of Roman Catholic faith communities. An urgency to develop imaginative leadership rooted in values, and respecting inclusivity and partnership, is experienced by many in the community.

In an effort to image parish leadership models for the future, I initiated a congregational study, focusing on one parish as a revealing text. St. Monica's faith community was chosen because of its visionary leadership, and its involvement and empowerment of women and men in leadership. The research included observations, on-site visits and interviews. Analysis yielded a picture of operative values, metaphors and theological stances, from which implications were drawn for developing future leadership models. The wisdom gleaned from the study of St. Monica's parish was then woven with a review of literature on Celtic spirituality, feminist theology and organizational leadership. An integrative analysis of the combined research was done; foundational values and components for future leadership models were proposed. The method used was a form of qualitative research, influenced by the participation observation method of anthropologists, together with the ethogenic method of Ron Harre, P.F. Secord and Associates.

The research surfaced many important findings and conclusions. Among these are: 1) the key to leadership is relationship and not skill development, structure or power; 2) in opposition to dualistic, hierarchical world-views, feminist theology and Celtic spirituality stress interconnectedness and inclusivity which are fundamental to the development of future leadership models; 3) both hierarchical and charismatic elements of the Catholic Church must be honored and balanced; 4) intentional processes are needed to enable the transition from hierarchical models of leadership to more inclusive ones especially processes for and integrating feminist and Celtic values and; 5) the Church needs to give priority to including the wealthy, poor, old, and young, as well as persons of many cultures and both genders, in the community's circles of relationship and involvement.

The study concludes that several steps and strategies are essential to successfully implementing new models and paradigms of leadership. In particular, transformational leadership, spiritual renewal, and processes to communicate the vision across parishes, deaneries and Archdiocesan entities, are essential for gaining commitment from the faith community.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My experience as Archdiocesan Director of Religious Education has alerted me to the need for innovative leadership in the Church today. In my consultation with parish staffs many questions have surfaced around authority and participative involvement at the parish level. People realize that, where predominantly hierarchical modes of leadership prevail, one cannot credibly talk about community and mutuality. At the same time, new paradigms are emerging, holding hope for change and renewal. People who are drawn to these paradigms cry out for imaginative leadership, rooted in values, and respecting the interconnectedness of all of life.

Convinced of the need for change and for visionary leadership, church leaders need to examine the fabric of relationships in the community of faith; they need to comprehend the urgency for adjusting the sails, and taking some fresh directions. Living in a high tech age, an age of impersonalism, an imperative rests on the church to re-discover, re-affirm and renew the dignity of persons and their network of relationships. Many experience alienation; sexism and racism are rampant; and for some people, the rituals and symbols that bore meaning in the past no longer hold promise.

It is imperative for Church leaders and communities to develop leadership models in response to changing times and circumstances. The purpose of this study was to re-imagine new paradigms of leadership and identify fundamental values, components and strategies to successfully respond to the needs of the Church of the third millennium.

Identifying Challenges

Challenges to minister sensitively in multi-cultural, inclusive communities face the church more and more each year. While at the beginning of the century, ninety percent (90%) of the population of the United States was made up of white ethnic people with their origin in Europe, the number has steadily declined. In the year 2000 it stands at only sixty percent (60%) of the total, and is more accurately estimated at 30-40% of the Catholic population in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Some of the new groups to arrive — particularly Hispanics, Vietnamese, and Filipinos — have strong ties with the Catholic Church, and the newly arrived Africans have also had a relationship with Christianity and the Catholic Church for the better part of this century. The challenge is not, then, to evangelize non-Christians who have never heard the Good News; rather, the challenge for leadership is to find creative means of inviting these already evangelized groups, to participate in the life and ministry of the community. At the same time they must

be initiated in ways that do not depreciate or ignore the religious experiences they bring.

The traditional paradigm and model for parish leadership is patriarchal and hierarchical and often lacks a relational presence – a sense of connectedness with one another, with the earth, and a willingness to share responsibility for life.¹ Contemporary social commentators and theologians propose that the root of the problem lies in the loss of the "feminine symbol;" feminine models are often relational, inclusive and transforming, in contrast to more masculine models of conquest, power and violence.²

Because of the tremendous growth in lay ministry and a decline in the number of clergy, a patriarchal model no longer adequately serves the needs of a faith community that desires to serve with authenticity and commitment. People want to be involved; they want to assume roles of leadership and live their baptismal commitment. Our times bid us to reflect on our collective experiences, to admit that the traditional patriarchal model of leadership needs renewal and adaptation. Therefore, we must move forward with determination, and carve out a fresh vision for parish leadership that is inclusive, relational and empowering.

I believe that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is experiencing a major paradigmatic shift in its vision and approach to parish leadership. This is both

¹ Fran Ferder and John Heagle, Partnership: Women and Men in Ministry (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1989), 11.

² Ibid.

challenging and exciting; it demands openness and willingness to let go of the status quo. The need for structural change becomes apparent in what I call a compartmentalized mentality about parish leadership and ministry. Each agency, structure, group, and movement tends to function in isolation from the other or with minimal cooperation. A competitive mentality and an unwillingness to share resources, ideas and vision takes over, and it is very difficult to overcome these attitudes.

Another problem is the coexistence of parallel models where the parish ministers function out of a collaborative partnership vision, while the pastor and administrative staff, function out of a hierarchical one. This creates a fundamentally dysfunctional situation with negative consequences, ranging from apathy to anger and disillusionment. It is clear that the traditional model of leadership will not meet the needs of the church of the future, and it is imperative that Church leadership examine what works and risk developing new models. The question remains, will we seize the day? Will our leadership muster the energy, enthusiasm and vision that are necessary to give direction, solidity and credibility to our ministry efforts, to developing "New Wine Skins"? On the other hand, will we abandon or defer the dream? And what happens to a dream deferred. Langston Hughes says in his poem "Harlem":

Maybe it just sags like a heavy load
Or does it explode?³

³ Langston Hughes, "Harlem," in The Norton Anthology of Poetry, eds. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and John Stallworthy, 4th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 1324.

If, indeed, the dream should explode, what might we experience in our parishes, our places of work? These are some of the questions that parishes must confront if they are to be leaven in the community of faith.

The Journey and Its Wisdom

To move forward, it is wise to look back and remember the tradition, the images and stories that have brought people to this moment. Leadership in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures has a long history of joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, and the journey has much wisdom to offer. There have been prophetic leaders, elders in tribal societies, abbots and abbesses leading monastic communities, philosophers, popes, monarchs, and so on.

The early Christian movement lacked the complex organization of an international religious body. The emphasis was on the Church gathered; each member of the community, through baptism into the Spirit, had gifts and charisma for the building up of the Body of Christ. The gifts, although various in kind, were fundamentally equal and non-hierarchical, and the community was empowered to teach, preach, administer, heal and celebrate. The Body of Christ image in the Church of Corinth symbolized this interconnectedness and sense of unity in diversity. Paul described the vision vividly, "Just as the body is one and

made up of many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor.12:12).⁴

At the same time, there are indications within the Pauline writings that Paul was struggling with a partnership, inclusive ministry. The community experienced problems on many levels, there were factions, some members twisted Paul's words, distorted his teaching, undermined his leadership, and used the doctrine of the Resurrection as an excuse for sexual immorality and other excesses.⁵

As a result of upheavals in community and ministry, Paul began to shift toward a more hierarchical understanding of Church. The Body of Christ image underwent change, and in Ephesians we read, "If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow completely into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each individual part to work according to its function" (Eph.4:16, NJB). The head, Christ, is now over and above the body, signaling the need for order and perjurying "Office" in the ministerial life of the Community. Consequently, the transition to a more institutionalized experience of Church, and the emergence of "early Catholicism," is detected in the pastoral letters and later writings of the New Testament.

⁴ Scripture cited by the writer is from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

⁵ Ferder and Heagle, 99.

Following the decree of Constantine in the fourth century, which recognized the legitimacy of the Church throughout the Roman empire, Church leadership assumed more the trappings of a monarchical structure, rather than a structure of service. Evelyn and James Whitehead, in their book The Promise of Partnership: Leadership and Ministry in an Adult Church, support this assertion.

They write:

As Christianity expanded during the third and fourth centuries, ministry began to shrink. The rich variety of charisma, scattered throughout the earliest Christian communities, were gradually absorbed into the ministry of priest. The powerful gifts of teaching, healing, prophesying and community administration, were seen as uniquely belonging to the priest and bishop.⁶

Gradually, a clear separation between clergy and laity took place, and the whole interdependent, integrated vision of the early Christian community disappeared.

The Church was left with the image of leaders and pyramids, where all power flowed from the top down.

In the early 1960s, Vatican II was convoked to reflect, evaluate, envision and return to an earlier Christian understanding of Church and Church leadership, one in which the whole community experienced a sense of belonging. This initiative came from Pope John XXIII's conviction that the Church needed renewal and adaptation to the signs of the times. He believed that the Church had been shutting itself off from the mainstream of evangelization, and was becoming

⁶ James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, The Promise of Partnership: Leadership and Ministry in an Adult Church (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 21.

less influential in the lives of its members.⁷ It was an ambitious program of renewal that was to affect every aspect of Church life and ministry. The response to this challenge for universal Church renewal, resulted in over thirty years of change and transition.

These consequent changes have influenced all facets of parish leadership and ministry. No longer is the priest expected to be the sole leader; rather he, together with his parish team, is challenged to re-imagine ministry, community roles and relationships. Conscious of their baptismal call and commitment, parishioners seek to participate in the authority structures and decision-making processes of the parish.

The cry for collegiality, partnership, lay ministry formation and involvement has been heard and implemented by some leaders, but more needs to be accomplished. Vatican II's teachings still await fuller support and implementation, especially in the area of leadership. The challenge is to create models for Church leadership that will provide direction, and to present a wholistic picture of a desired future, while integrating and inter-relating several components of team ministry. The goal is to move from a hierarchical, patriarchal model to a more inclusive, interrelated one, still respecting the need to balance authority and partnership. It is this vision of a discerning, faith-filled team effort that energizes this study and has led to proposals of a possible way forward.

⁷ Robert G. Duch, Successful Parish Leadership: Nurturing the Animated Parish, (Kansas City, MO: Sheet and Ward, 1990), 27.

Thesis

The writer proposes that more inclusive, effective parish leadership models can be developed by re-imagining the parish through the lens of a Celtic and feminist worldview, and by reinterpreting Spirit and Power from a feminist perspective. The purpose of this project is to explore that thesis and discover foundational principles and values essential to the development of inclusive partnership models for parish leadership.

Much work has been done in the area of feminist theology and Celtic spirituality, and the need for re-interpreting and restructuring church leadership has been recognized for a long time. Still there is a lack of integrative work in the areas of feminism and Celtic Spirituality and its application to Church leadership; this integrative work is the central challenge of this project. Gerald Arbuckle, in his book Refounding the Church, points out the need for creative initiatives. He asserts that organizations, the church included, are built to administer, maintain and protect from harm what already exists; pathfinders are designed to give birth to that which has never been in existence before.⁸ The church must ever be re-founding or transforming itself, hence the need for charismatic structures, alongside institutional ones, within the church.⁹

⁸ Gerald A. Arbuckle, Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 21-25.

⁹ Ibid.

Arbuckle clarifies the purpose and styles of leadership required in contemporary communities, using religious congregations as examples of gospel-oriented communities. Furthermore, he elaborates on the resistances that occur as systems experience paradigm shifts. He underscores the place and stages of denial, grief and recovery, and the need for rituals of mourning as systems undergo transitions. All of these insights are very helpful in the search for, and implementation of new models of leadership based on the kinship focus of Celtic and feminist theology.

The critique of Church by Joan Chittister in her book, Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men, motivates people to reexamine present structures and begin to imagine Church as a circle of persons rather than a pyramid of power. She proposes that the patriarchal church, which has shaped our world, has also now brought us to the edge of destruction with its dualisms, hierarchies and inequalities.¹⁰ Chittister outlines the historical realities that have produced this situation, examines how patriarchal culture and spirituality maintain their hold on us, and argues for a feminist worldview that recognizes the full humanity of women, and leads all of us to new and better ways of being and relating.¹¹

¹⁰ Joan D. Chittister, Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 25.

¹¹ Ibid., 22-25.

The theme of power is elaborated by Anna Case-Winters, in her book, God's Power: Traditional Understandings and Contemporary Challenges; she argues that a reconstructive doctrine of omnipotence based upon a new meaning of power, is both possible and desirable.¹² In this constructive proposal, omnipotence means the power to influence all and to be influenced by all. The insights and images appropriated from feminist thought ascribe to this power a character that is life-giving and world-generating. Its operation is synergistic (co-operating with other powers) and empowering rather than overpowering. The implied ethic which accompanies this model, is one of solidarity rather than obedience.¹³

The metaphor, "welcome table partnership," with its vision of connectedness and interconnectedness is another very helpful image proposed by Letty M. Russell in her work, Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church. She uses the metaphor to discuss shifts needed in ecclesiology if everyone is to be welcomed at God's table. She explores ways of nurturing feminism and liberation ecclesiology for persons choosing to be connected to people at the margin of life, as well as to the sisters and brothers in our midst, and to the life-giving gifts of tradition.¹⁴

¹² Anna Case-Winters, God's Power: Traditional Understanding and Contemporary Challenges (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1990), 172-75.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Letty M. Russell, Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1993), 196-98.

Likewise, Fran Ferder and John Heagle outline the task of developing a leadership of partnership; and they argue that the essence of partnership and collaboration is found in the very image of God. They craft a vision for mutuality that is rooted in Scripture, and suggest that Jesus proclaimed a return to this original vision, which the early church responded to with enthusiasm. As time went on, cultural tendencies toward patriarchy stifled the spirit of partnership.¹⁵

The richness of the myths, legends and insights from Celtic Spirituality contain much that is applicable to the contemporary world and to leadership in particular. Celtic and feminist spirituality, although thousands of years apart, have much in common; together they hold the promise of creating a new vision for ministry in the twenty-first century. In the interlocking of themes of God and humanity, nature and grace, heaven and earth, spirit and matter, we note that both spiritualities stand in opposition to a dualistic, hierarchical worldview and challenge us to imagine new ways of relating, being, and acting.

The importance of community and the role of monasteries are two very significant themes developed by Ian Bradley, in The Celtic Way. Within Celtic monastic communities, celibate members, as well as lay people experienced the fruits of collaboration. Education, pastoral care, and liturgical leadership were provided by the monks or women religious; in turn, lay people and their families helped the monasteries grow their crops, manage their farms, fish, plant trees and

¹⁵ Ferder and Heagle, 17-59.

keep their bees. All received benefits from this mutual sharing of gifts, including those who only came for a short stay.¹⁶ The presence and gift of women was vital to the life and ministry of Celtic Communities. While other Churches, founded among desert Christians and the inhabitants of countries bordering on the Mediterranean, increasingly isolated women from positions of authority, the Celtic Church, influenced by the Celts' belief that women were equal to men, encouraged women's leadership.¹⁷

The findings generated by these writers support the task of reconstructing parish leadership, based on insights from Celtic Spirituality and feminist theology. The challenge now is to examine and critique operative styles of leadership and to re-imagine new models based upon inclusion, participation, and collaboration.

Scope and Limitations

The project is developed in the context of St. Monica's Roman Catholic faith community. This parish is chosen because of its vision, involvement and empowerment of many people in its present leadership structures. Through observations, on-site visits and interviews, we explore important questions, such as the underlying images, values, and theological stances that help shape the vibrancy experienced at St. Monica's? Integrating these learnings with insights from feminist theology, Celtic spirituality and organizational leadership, the project

¹⁶ Ian Bradley, The Celtic Way (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1993), 31-70.

¹⁷ Edward D. Sellner, "Celtic Spirituality and Prayer," Praying, Sept.-Oct. 1996, 4-9.

culminates in the identification of essential components of future models of church leadership.

Insights from Elizabeth Johnson's feminist perspective are central to the study. In her book Women, Earth and Creator Spirit, she writes, "The intuition of interconnectedness in woman's experience deconstructs the pyramid of hierarchical dualism, and constructs in its place a circle of mutual, unfettered interconnectedness."¹⁸ The implications that flow from this critique are many in relation to the process of reconstructing and re-imagining the parish of the future. Both Celtic and feminist thinking prize interweaving, interconnected relationships; consequently insights from early Celtic Christianity and some modern sources contribute a great deal to the study.

While the scope is broad, the focus is on parish leadership toward the future. No attempt is made to construct a new model; rather, the intent is to identify theoretical and practical processes, foundational to the development and of new models. Steps toward the implementation of such models are outlined for leadership on the parish, deanery and diocesan level.

The Method

A congregational study focuses on one parish as a revealing text. The qualitative research method employed is influenced by the participant observation

¹⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson, Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 28.

methods of anthropologists, together with the ethogenic method of Ron Harre, P.F. Secord and associates.¹⁹ The wisdom that surfaced from the study of St. Monica's parish, Santa Monica, is woven with library research focusing on Celtic and feminist texts on spirituality, leadership and ecclesiology. An integrative analysis of these strands of research is done; theoretical and practical proposals from the data and analyses are offered.

The method applied included the following steps:

1. **Preparation:** Contacted St. Monica's and set up a research plan.
Collected documents, such as Parish history, ethnic backgrounds, demographics, newsletters, bulletins.
2. **Story collecting:** The purpose of the story-collecting was to listen, observe and record. The stories were gathered through observation, interviews, and review of printed documents
3. **Observations:** Observations were carried out in various parts of the life of the Parish, especially, worship, community gatherings, business meetings, ministries and outreach to the larger community. Questions were prepared to help collect the data. (See Appendix A.)
4. **Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with leadership, and members of the faith community regarding leadership styles, images, relationships

¹⁹ Mary Elizabeth Moore. "Dynamics of Religious Culture: Exogenic Method:" Unpublished paper presented, September 1998, Claremont School of Theology, California.

and their influence on vision, mission and operational patterns and principles. (See Appendix B and C.)

5. **Analysis:** In this phase the elements and patterns in the stories collected are examined; common words, phrases, symbols, patterns of interaction, and recurring themes were noted. Several questions were asked of the data as a way of probing various dimensions of leadership (see Appendix D).

The steps of analysis described here prepared the way for the next step of gathering the data into a parish story.

6. **Story-Telling:** The integrative phase of the research was story telling. The basic purpose was to re-present the leadership vision, the style of the parish, and its effect on the community.
7. **Theory-Building:** This phase constructed theory from the Parish study and weaved it with insights from feminist work and Celtic spirituality to give shape to new models of parish leadership.
8. **Proposal for Practice:** Conclusions drawn from the research and the literature were developed into foundational values and practical proposals for parish, deanery and diocesan levels of the Church.

Outline of Chapters

Introduction

The introduction positions parish leadership in the context of a Post Vatican II church undergoing a paradigm shift in leadership structures. Hierarchical, patriarchal leadership styles no longer meet the needs of a new church – a church of inclusion and involvement. New paths must be taken. To this end, a critique is made of the traditional leadership model, and an alternative partnership, an inclusive one is proposed.

Wisdom Gleaned from St. Monica's Parish Story

Crucial to the development of new models of leadership is the willingness to draw upon the wisdom of a parish and to build participative collaborative structures. The chapter describes and interprets the St. Monica experience. It critiques, gathers insights, and suggests applications to new modes of operating in this parish and others.

Feminism and Leadership

Chapter 3 offers a feminist vision of interrelationship as foundational to the development of parish leadership of the future. The chapter is built upon the wisdom of Celtic Spirituality and the feminist theories of Elizabeth Johnson and Anna Case-Winters. Two themes, in particular – Spirit and Power – are explored, and implications for leadership styles, roles and relationships are proposed.

Envisioning Participative Models of Parish Leadership

Wisdom and direction gained from observations and interviews with leadership and members of St. Monica's parish are integrated in the fourth chapter with insights from Celtic spirituality, feminist theology, and organizational theory and practice. This body of information is analyzed and reflected upon; from it emerges some key directions and components to include in the development of contemporary leadership models. Implications for vision, partnership, mission, collaboration, and ministry are discussed.

Transition, Spirituality and Transformational Leadership

Letting go of the familiar and moving to something new is often a painful process. Chapter 5 develops strategies, rituals and skills for dealing effectively with transition. Acknowledging that transformational leadership is foundational to the development of innovative models, characteristics of such leadership, and the spirituality that grounds and energizes it, are explored. Significant conclusions are summarized and implications for leadership development at the parish, deanery, and diocesan levels are proposed.

CHAPTER 2

ONE PARISH'S EFFORT TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE MODEL OF LEADERSHIP: WISDOM GLEANED FROM ST. MONICA'S PARISH

As we stand at the dawn of the third Millennium, we rejoice at the effects feminism has had on Church leadership, and affirm the quiet rumblings that have changed our ecclesial lives as feminist influence continues to flourish. The future, indeed, cries out for models of leadership influenced by feminist thought and Celtic spirituality, emphasizing mutuality, partnership and creativity rather than dominance over and control. The past is not devoid of such innovative models. A striking one can be found in the pages of scripture. Jesus, in his life, death and resurrection, dramatically reversed classical notions of power and authority. He was strong in his rejection of power as exercised in the patriarchal tradition, a rejection his followers found difficult to understand. He challenged his disciples who were arguing about who should be regarded as greatest, "Earthly kings lord it over their people . . . it cannot be that with you . . . I am in your midst as the one who serves you." (Luke 22:24-28).¹

In an effort to envision and develop participative leadership models, I interviewed parishioners and leadership persons from a parish attempting to

¹ Kaye Ashe, The Feminization of the Church? (Kansas City, Mo: Sheed and Ward, 1997), 141.

create inclusive, innovative models. My intention was to examine operative styles, the influence of feminist and Celtic thought (if any), and the roles played by women and men in shaping the overall vision and ministries. Founded in 1886, St. Monica's is a suburban, middle to upper middle class parish. Situated in the City of Santa Monica, seven blocks from the beach, it is an integrated community with a population of 5,700 families. A defining moment in the parish came through the experience of the 1994 earthquake. Forty-five minutes before the early morning liturgy was about to be celebrated, a vigorous earthquake hit, practically demolishing St. Monica's Church. The beautiful stately structure, rocked from top to bottom; roof, walls, windows and art works were destroyed. The community experienced a tremendous loss and grieved for weeks. The familiar sacred space where they had gathered and where they had been welcomed, nourished, blessed and sent forth, collapsed before their eyes. In the midst of the catastrophe however, the leadership team mustered the courage to proclaim, "Yes, we are broken but not destroyed." This potentially devastating loss brought the community together to reflect, to question and to pray. The whole ordeal enabled them to realize, as one interviewee commented, that in the midst of weakness, strength is often experienced.

In the ensuing months, the community gathered for liturgical celebration in the school gymnasium. It was here in this make-shift space that parishioners came to the awareness that community is not dependent upon a physical building but upon the ability to relate, reach out, include, and serve. During the 14 months of

re-designing and re-building the Church structure, the theme "All are Welcome" emerged, and many new members found a home at St. Monica's Parish.

A spirit of welcoming, openness and outreach to the wider Church characterizes this faith community. It is a parish alive with activity and involvement. The volunteers, numbering 500, are proud to be part of this life-giving experience. They are empowered to share their gifts and to contribute to the growth of the community. One parishioner says that "volunteers enjoy meeting lots of people in a fun filled atmosphere," and their gifts are affirmed and appreciated.

The spiritual life of St. Monica's is nourished and challenged through liturgical celebrations, which speak to the heart and enliven the spirit. They are well planned, rich in symbol and ritual, and engaging of active participation by the community. These celebrations are the high point of the week, and all activities flow to and from these gatherings.

Given the tangible vibrancy, sense of bondedness, and pride generated by the community, I was very curious to learn what motivates, sustains and directs their energy. How is leadership understood and exercised? How is the role of women in leadership evident? How does the team operate? How is power shared? To help ascertain these directions and underpinnings, I chose to study St. Monica's Parish. This entailed on-site visits and attendance at liturgical celebrations, parish fiestas, educational and formational programs, as well as interviews with parish leadership and parishioners.

Parish Observations

Observing externals, such as space, symbols, parish bulletins and interaction among staff and parishioners, yielded significant learnings. While physical space is rather limited, every inch is used for the service of the parish community. Many new facilities are being built in response to the growing needs of the faith community. The most recent is a spirituality center where parishioners can "drop in" to be refreshed in a meditative atmosphere of quiet, and where others can attend programs on spiritual formation and spiritual development. One parishioner, reflecting on the gift of this center, remarked, "It is an oasis in the midst of the hustle and bustle of life and a reminder of what is really important." A gathering space is central to the faith community, and here all are invited to spend time with family and friends in a leisurely atmosphere of camaraderie.

Recently, renowned architect Frank O.Gehry designed a new gathering facility for St. Monica's which enhances the parish's spirit of unity. The new tile-roofed, multi-level facility blends nicely with the existing surroundings – notably, the 74 year old Parish Church – yet it also incorporates certain modern touches of the architect, who is known world wide for his radically unique designs, in particular for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Spain. Reflecting on the need for this new space, Frank O.Gehry noted in an interview with the Tidings newspaper staff,

I was watching all the people coming and going one Sunday, I loved the spirit of hospitality and the gathering of people both before and after Mass. But

the space in which it was done was cramped and awkward. I wondered how I could arrange the patio, Church and center to work together to speak a message of faith, community and hospitality. I wondered how I could make the Church more visible so that it could begin its inspiring role from the moment people arrive at the Parish. How could space and structure combine to speak the message St Monica's preaches?²

Gehry, whose approach to architecture involves as much listening as drawing, and who believes in working closely with his client, did so at St. Monica's.

In keeping with the spirit of the Parish, many gifts were utilized in creating the new space. Gehry confessed, I have always felt a spiritual connection and this new design is a way I can honor the spirituality I experience here."³ A "welcome table," symbolic of the hospitality offered to newcomers, is at the heart of this gathering space. Visitors comment that, "it speaks of care, outreach and inclusion." It is significant that over 3,000 persons have become members of the community over the past two years. The first connection with the parish happens around the "welcome table," and from here they are mentored and encouraged to actively participate in the community.

² Denis Heaney, "A New House of Welcome," Tidings (Archdiocese of Los Angeles), 30 July 1999, 14.

³ Ibid.

Symbols

The parish theme, chosen annually by the leadership team, is visible at the main entrance to the Church. It speaks of focus and direction and encapsulates the community's spirit of inclusion, as in three recent themes: "All are Welcome," "Make this House a Home," "I am For You." In an effort to pay homage to the story and tradition of St. Monica (Patroness of the parish) and her son Augustine, a mural depicting mother and son was commissioned in 1990 for the north wall of the Church. The artful depiction of Monica's steadfastness in the face of disappointment, and her request that Augustine remember her at the altar, are reminders of the human spirit's potential for growth and change and a testimony to the strength of women. In the sanctuary, a magnificent painting of the Resurrected Christ is flanked on either side by an image of Mary and St. John. It symbolizes hope and the promise of new life.

People want to belong to this faith community because, as some exclaim, "It is supportive and inviting," "We feel empowered to get involved," "We are significant here," "We love St. Monica's, it is home." The beautifully constructed Baptismal font, and the precious crystal vessels for the oils of anointing, symbolize the community's outreach, inclusion and healing ministries. All are welcome to share in a mutuality of giving and receiving that is respectful and life-giving.

Worship Experiences

Worship and liturgical celebration is at the heart of this community's experience, as evidenced by the huge crowds in attendance and the enthusiasm generated. Some participants remark: "We drive long distances to participate, and it is worth every bit of the journey," and "The celebrations here renew us; we are truly blessed." Most liturgies are intergenerational, but the Sunday 5:30 p.m. service has a special focus for young adults in their 20's and early 30's. Young people commute from the surrounding areas to participate in this very lively and spirit-filled celebration.

The ministry of hospitality is central to all gatherings. The community is greeted, welcomed, and invited to reach out to the newcomers. One woman explained, "We are acknowledged and made to feel part of the parish." All are encouraged to participate actively through song, response, and gesture.

Rituals of blessing, procession, and dance are integrated into community gatherings. An artistic environment is created to highlight the liturgical seasons. Flowers, plants, decorative banners and draped colorful materials are carefully arranged to help draw the community into the spirit and focus of the season.

Church Bulletins

The Church bulletin, several pages long, gives a window into the activities and programs offered by the parish. It speaks of "life" "attentiveness to need" and "openness to listen." What is striking is the variety and number of ministries

sponsored. Among the offerings are: ministry to people separated and divorced, parent faith sharing groups, welcome home gatherings to those who have been alienated from Church, and outreach to those who would like to come back to the family of St. Monica's but do not know how, or are a bit afraid to take the first step. Additionally, the parish offers a gay and lesbian outreach, activities for young ministering adults, healing and grief ministry, ministry to persons with Aids and a whole spectrum of educational and faith development opportunities, together with enrichment processes for all ages. Browsing through the bulletin one is filled with hope in the community's response to contemporary issues.

Interviews

In an effort to research several aspect of leadership and ministry at St. Monica's Parish, members of the faith community and leadership persons were interviewed. The purpose was to explore areas such as: relationships, structures, images, authority and operative ecclesiology. To this end, questions were developed which focused on six main areas of research. These were furnished to the interviewees prior to the interview. These included:

- A. Operative images by which the leadership functions in the parish
- B. Relationships in the leadership team, the parish community and the larger community
- C. Leadership structures
- D. Authority, power and partnership

- E. Operative ecclesiology
- F. Ministries and leadership

Interview meetings were scheduled, and interviewees were requested to reflect on the research questions and come prepared to respond. A few phone interviews were conducted to accommodate persons with busy schedules. The insights and learnings which emerged were many, often complementary and all yielding wisdom borne out of experience. This is illustrated in the following summaries.

Operative Images by Which Leadership Functions

The images and metaphors employed by the interviewees to describe leadership at St. Monica's were rich and varied. Talking about the visionary, balanced leadership, one respondent, Mike, chose a "mobile" as the image that captures the spirit of the team. He said that a mobile has different weights, and it flows around at random, yet there is order. There are many points of contact in a mobile's free flowing; if the wind blows it can get off course but gradually it stabilizes again. Likewise, the leadership at St. Monica's has different gifts, different weights, and individuals and teams experience freedom to go in different directions; yet, all are interconnected and effect change in one another. Checks and balances are experienced in the processes of goal setting and accountability.

Another church leader offered the image of a "tree" to express the strength and rootedness of the leadership team; the different branches symbolize the

variety of persons who have been called, enabled and empowered to assume leadership roles. Many have borne good fruit. Some have provided oxygen, and all have served to strengthen the trunk.

The metaphor of "orchestra" was provided by Catherine, another respondent. Her metaphor described the team in action – a team connected, supported and motivated by a visionary leader. This image fits the leadership understandings of Carlo Maria Giulini, Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He speaks about the power of relationship and inter-connectedness. He said:

My intention has always been to arrive at human contact without enforcing authority. A musician, after all, is not a military officer. What matters most is human contact. The great mystery of music-making requires real friendship among those who work together. Every member of the orchestra knows I am with him/her in my heart.⁴

Catherine's image of a team working together with a visionary leader is well captured by this orchestra metaphor.

Not only does St. Monica's pastor create the bonds of friendship described by Guilini, but he also sees beyond the present to what might be, what could be. He imagines possibilities and recognizes the potential. More than that, he inspires others to dream along with him and create the future. He provides recognition, support and guidance, but allows plenty of space and freedom for gifts to flourish

⁴ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge, (New York: Harper Business, 1985), 52.

and find their own expression. He has the ability to spot talent and enable newcomers to become part of the action. On many occasions I have seen him reach out to high school youth to call forth their gifts and involve them in the community. In recent months he has been appointed vicar for one of the pastoral Regions in the Archdiocese, and in this capacity he has visited many parishes to administer the sacrament of confirmation. Parishes commenting on his visit said, "He brought spirit and life to us," "His energy is contagious," "He gives very inspiring homilies," and "He is so personable."

In addition to carrying out a vision and setting a direction, the leader was also described as one who shepherds. This shepherding is evident in the caring, compassionate, healing outreach that is characteristic of St. Monica's Parish. And so the orchestra continues to grow in number as new talent is tapped, gifts are identified and they are given space to develop.

Relationship in the Leadership Team, the Parish and the Larger Community

The essence of ministry at St. Monica's is not skill development, structures or power, but relationships. The upbuilding of community is a priority and the parish themes give evidence to this; for example, "All are Welcome" and "I am for You" send strong messages of embracing everyone, of welcome not only to the core community, but also to the stranger. At liturgy each Sunday, visitors are asked to stand so that they can be acknowledged; and those who sit next to them are encouraged to assist them throughout the celebration and make them feel at

home. In addition, they are invited to go to the "welcome table" for updating on parish activities or invitation to participate in parish programs or processes. Many opportunities are provided for sharing food and fellowship. A parish picnic is enjoyed in the summer; the Oktoberfest brings together young and old for a weekend of fun and games.

Listening is a high priority for this community. Parish leaders describe listening as an absolute pre-requisite for effective leadership because it is a primary mechanism for building and sustaining relationships. A few years ago, the parish conducted listening sessions with the whole community. Individuals were contacted by phone and asked significant questions regarding the parish and its ministries. They were also invited to get involved and to share their gifts with the wider community. According to the interviewees, this process created a foundation for communication where mutual respect, openness and trust were experienced. Soliciting the input called for the exploration of ideas and this in turn signaled receptivity, revealing that leaders truly wanted to know and respond to needs.

A tangible sense of community, bondedness and pride is experienced at St. Monica's, so tangible that people drive 20 to 30 miles each Sunday to participate in worship and to spend time with friends and acquaintances. The author's own connection with the parish has broadened as has her circle of friends, and the circle keeps expanding. At a recent birthday celebration, as a group gathered to celebrate and give thanks. Several agreed that it was the St. Monica community experience that brought them together and held them in friendship.

Leadership Structures

The multi-layered leadership structures are founded on a fairly hierarchical model of governance with management and administrative roles, together with an over-arching leadership team. The flow moves from the administrative team, which includes Pastor, Associate Pastors, Pastoral Associates, High school and Grade School Principals and Parish Administrator. Relating to this leadership team is a core staff including full-time and part-time employees responsible for the direction and support of particular ministries. This group comes together with the Administrative team for regular staff meetings, sharing, visioning and implementing programs. The core staff is organized in a "cluster" structure that facilitates collaborative efforts among ministries. Occasionally, they are expanded to include full staff participation in special projects and events.

The "mobile" image, with its free flow and spirit-driven energy, was reported by Mike as a way to facilitate communication and interaction on many levels. Each level is enabled and empowered to be creative, authority is delegated, and systems of accountability are in place. In speaking with the leadership team and staff persons, all of them felt that they were trusted and were given the resources and time to vision, develop programs, involve volunteers, and enjoy a good measure of autonomy.

Authority, Power, Partnership

Leaders continually say that they endeavor to function in a collegial manner, to solicit input, listen and discern. They also recognize their own struggles to shift from a predominant patriarchal structure to a more inclusive one. Clericalism runs deep; it is the model that people grew up with, it is secure and reliable. The saving grace for this parish is the pastor, who is a very visionary, charismatic, inspirational leader, and yet is aware of his own history and the years of believing that "the pastor is in charge and the one who must make all the decisions." His growth in consciousness of the need to transition to a truly collaborative partnership model has been a gradual process. He recalls times when he was reluctant to use inclusive language, when he believed that men ought to be in leadership positions and that women's talents were better utilized in support roles. Through active listening, exposure to other voices and gradual openness to change, he has experienced a transformation that has motivated, liberated and encouraged him to adopt an inclusive, participative style of leadership.

Already the pastor has forged ahead and made some inroads by appointing a lay woman and a woman religious to the positions of Pastoral Associates. In this capacity the women share a measure of equality with the male Associate Pastors. They are given the opportunity to participate and use their gifts for service. Many of my interviewees commented on the very positive effect that women's perspective and modes of operating have on the entire parish. One said,

"Their presence has challenged structures and viewpoints and has served to surface new and creative ways of functioning as team." The presence of these women gives hope to over half the population which is impacted by prejudice and discriminatory roles, practices and behaviors.

While these efforts toward equality and partnership are affirmed and supported, the women themselves are cognizant that they are operating within a patriarchal/clerical structure. One woman commented, "We do a knee jerk approach to collaboration." She is obviously aware that while the team speaks the language of collaboration, action and concretization of the concept lags behind. Consciousness raising and honest communication are tasks that these women must assume in order to minister to the structures and challenge them to become more inclusive and collaborative.

Power is exercised in a fairly collegial manner within the different levels of team and staff. Generally, the ministries enjoy autonomy. One person described their sense of "One direction — one encompassing vision out of which everything else flows." This person elaborates by describing the parish in terms of healthy authority, which invites the group into partnership in such a way that "power with" is realized. The definition of authority suggested by Fran Ferder and John Heagle in Partnership: Women and Men in Ministry is lived out at St. Monica's Parish. They write, "Authority is the creative capacity to call forth the vision and the gifts

of people; it is inviting rather than controlling, nurturing rather than constrictive."⁵

This seems to express the way in which leaders of St. Monica's parish experience their shared and interlocking roles.

While they lauded shared leadership, the interviewees recognized that management and administration are necessary to a group's life. Every institution or organization needs competent and faithful stewards of the group's financial resources, investments, records, physical plant, and systems of time management and accountability.

According to the interviewees, authentic shared decision making is not fully realized in the Administrative team. One person remarked, "We do more consultation rather than shared decision making." However, the Young Ministering Adult facilitator described very positive results generated by the experience of shared decision-making responsibilities in the young adult team. She said, "Everyone comes equal to the table." She explained that one member facilitates the discussion, every voice is listened to and a consensus model for decision making is used. She also emphasized the high energy in the young adult group, where they employ very creative approaches to ministry with, to and by the young adults. The title "Young Ministering Adults," with emphasis on ministering, conjures up images of young people taking their Baptismal call seriously and striving to live it out in the marketplace. New members are regularly invited to be

⁵ Ferder and Heagle, 127.

part of the team. This calling forth of membership is crucial for ongoing growth and development. A brainstorming session is held to identify potential new members. Time is given to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of each name brought into the discussion, and through a process of gift discernment, the new team members are invited. Those involved experience this as a very inclusive, respectful process built on gift sharing rather than on roles.

Operative Ecclesiology

The ecclesiology of St. Monica's focuses primarily on two themes: service and *communio*. The first – the common thread of service to others – was repeatedly articulated by several of the interviewees; it is also symbolized in every Holy Thursday Celebration as the Pastor and several of the community participated in a reciprocal feet washing ritual. The accent is often placed on Jesus's teaching and example. When Jesus responded to a power conflict among his disciples regarding who was the most important, he said, "The greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves" (Luke 22: 26). Indeed, service in the likeness of Jesus is seen as foundational to the St. Monica community.

On the eve of Thanksgiving, 500 volunteers, including High School youth, prepare and serve turkey dinner to over 1,000 poor and homeless people. This is one outreach among many that is initiated, honored and shared by the community. Yet, in her article "The Dance of Leadership," Jane Malone cautions about

"servant language." She contends that the very notion of servant leadership is problematic, because the word servant, which comes from the Latin "servus" means "slave" and suggests one who is less than the "master."⁶ We know that Jesus' life of ministry and relationship modeled reciprocal servant leadership-followership that was respected, mutual and equal. Still, servant language, according to Malone, needs to be reclaimed so that it is not used in ways that are oppressive, but is understood as "power with" where energy is co-created, in mutuality and relatedness.⁷ This understanding of "power with" was evident in many relationships and ministries at St. Monica's. The staff testified to the trust and empowerment that they experienced from leadership at all levels. They were freed to respond to the needs of the community and to use their gifts and talents in new and surprising ways.

At St. Monica's, the desire to serve others takes precedence over the desire to be in formal leadership positions. This tendency fits the vision of Janet Malone regarding servant leadership. People move into leadership because of the vision they hold and the passion they feel to help move the organization in a particular direction.⁸

St. Monica's leadership has also inspired an enthusiasm and challenge to stretch out and invite others into the circle. Church as "communio" reaching out is

⁶ Janet Malone, "The Dance of Leadership," Human Development 19, (Fall 1998): 46.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

a hallmark of this parish. The interviewees spoke of the need to bring the people together and to keep widening the circle, especially if they are to grow in the fullness of their Christian calling and ultimately to act upon Christian values in their homes and places of work. While the interviewees affirmed the effort of the community to reach out to the stranger, the one in need, they also believed that they need growth in this area. They need to involve more people motivated with a passion for justice, service and mission, who are willing to move beyond the parish boundaries into the larger community.

Ministries and Leadership

Many varied parish-sponsored ministries are offered at St. Monica's. Real efforts are made to listen and respond to needs. Consequently, formal ministries continue to escalate, together with the training and formation of lay ministers. Still, according to the interviewees, an understanding of ministry flowing from the Sacrament of Baptism, needs to be embraced by the whole assembly so that they are convinced of their vocation in the world. This view is consistent with the long established teaching of the Church, restated by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), by the Synod on Laity held in Rome in 1987, and by the recent presbyterial assembly held in the Los Angeles Archdiocese, 1997. All the baptized participate in the mission of the Church in the world, the Church's secular vocation, but all in different ways. For lay Christians their presence and activity in the world is not something simply incidental; rather it is central to their vocation;

the "world" is the environment and the means by which a lay Christian lives out his or her vocation.⁹

Taking this mandate seriously, St. Monica's leadership team, recognizes the need to catechize the faithful and help them understand and live their Baptismal call and commission to bring Good News to the workplace, to the edges, and to all of Society. To this end they offer many theological and faith development opportunities.

Conclusions

The wisdom and insights surfaced at St. Monica's give guidance to parishes of the future as they attempt to build inclusive, participative leadership.

- Images such the *mobile*, a *tree*, an *orchestra* give clues to the freedom, the rootedness and the collaborative styles necessary for leadership teams of the future.
- The key to leadership as modeled at St. Monica's is not skill development, structures or power but relationship. Mutual respect, openness and trust are integral and foundational for healthy communication and community building.

⁹ Michael Nelson, " Priest Assembly Proceedings," Tidings (Archdiocese Los Angeles), 12 and 19 Dec. 1997, 14.

- Efforts to balance a hierarchical model of leadership with a more inclusive, collaborative one are crucial. "Power with" is realized in participative models.
- The positive effect that women's perspective and modes of interacting bring to leadership was evident at St. Monica's. Parishes of the future must recognize, affirm and fully involve the gifts of women.
- The inclusion of many voices and points of view is integral to the authenticity of decision making processes.
- Reaching out to serve, involve and welcome, as evidenced at St. Monica's, is key to the development of participative communities.

CHAPTER 3

FEMINISM, CELTIC SPIRITUALITY AND LEADERSHIP

Joyce Rupp's poem "Freedom," very powerfully attests to the wonderful spirit of freedom that is at the center of our being. She writes,

Inside each of us
There awaits
A wonderful
spirit of freedom

she waits
to dance
In the rooms
of our heart
that are closed
dark and cluttered

she waits
to dance
In the spaces
where negative feelings
have built barricades
and stock-piled weapons

she waits
to dance
in the corners
where we still
do not believe
in our goodness

inside each of us
there awaits
a wonderful
spirit of freedom.¹

It is this wonderful spirit of freedom that motivates parishes such as St. Monica's to risk something new, to include, to involve and empower. This same spirit is recaptured in Celtic spirituality and feminist theology and propels people forward in search for a preferred future for leadership in the Church.

During a recent ad liminia visit to Rome, together with Cardinal Mahony, several bishops, clergy and lay ministers, this author had the privilege of attending meetings with Vatican officials and a liturgical celebration with John Paul II. Reflecting on these experiences, several insights in relation to paradigm shifts, church leadership and tradition came to mind. In the past, Cardinals and Bishops, primarily, attended such gatherings, but Cardinal Mahony broke new ground and invited several lay ministers to participate and share their wisdom during the visit and dialogue sessions. Furthermore, in our meetings with John Paul II, we were grounded in a very familiar tradition, and yet we were able to give voice to hopes and dreams for the future. It brought together the best of two worlds, the richness of our Catholic Christian story, and the contemporary critique, affirmation, and development taking place as the journey evolves.

Out of this grounding and creative format, the author has attempted in this work to critique a theology of **God and Power** through the mindset of feminist

¹ Joyce Rupp, The Star in my Heart: Experiencing Sophia, Inner Wisdom (Philadelphia: Innisfree Press, 1990), 61. Used with permission.

theology, and to allow feminist thinking to inform leadership of the future. For this purpose, I draw upon the stories and traditions of women, and note the difficulties in their quest for wholeness, equality and partnership. At the same time their courage, insights and willingness to confront oppressive structures and mindsets shows that they have yielded a wisdom that inspires people to re-think theology and re-imagine leadership in light of feminist thought. In like manner, similar undergirding themes from Celtic spirituality, such as God, power, solidarity, connectedness are integrated. Drawing upon these sources, implications for developing parish leadership are presented.

Feminist Theology

While women affirm and believe in the power of God's liberating spirit at work in each human being, in relationships, in creation, in history and in theology, their experience of this spirit of freedom is often left unrealized. Many women's stories are sadly testimonies of oppression and patriarchy, of exclusion and devaluation, of marginalization and abuse, of hierarchical dualism and powerlessness.

Consider the stories of young female children in Zambia, who at the age of four and five are forced to carry heavy loads on their backs, with the result that their pelvic bone become deformed; they later experience great pain and near impossibility in giving birth. Consider the story of Lucia, a mother of nine children who speaks of the horrifying circumstances in which her children were conceived.

More often than not, the experience was one of rape rather than of caring, nurturing love. Violence and abusive language are at times endured by women who assert themselves, who seek to build relationships of mutuality. I remember Anne's story, when through tears she recalled an incident where she tried to express her opinion in a group of all males and was negated, scoffed at, and made to feel very small and insignificant.

In Churches, women are frequently silenced and dis-empowered. They are left bereft, operating with half a voice, and coerced into believing that tradition sets the parameters. In this assertion, they realize how fully the world has been defined by men. Hierarchical dualism which separates reality into two opposing spheres — spirit and matter — has major consequences for Christian theology and praxis. Spirit is valued more highly than matter and is equated with the masculine principle in the world, while matter is identified with the feminine. Spirit is transcendent and brings into play the mind, the soul, the infinite. Matter, on the other hand, shows up in immanence — the body, the emotions, the finite. The hierarchy of mind over body has political consequences and translates into structures of domination and subordination, as experienced in many models of leadership.

Related to these issues are patterns of human life. Structures of family life, of social, political, economic and ecclesial life, are predominantly patriarchal and androcentric. Inherent in all of these discriminatory structures is the denial of the rights of women as persons. The Church has reinforced the male domination and

it is taken for granted that the only way to image God is in male terms. Yet women's lived experiences have much to offer to the feminist agenda — an agenda that touches all aspects of life and relationships in this universe and beyond. "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life?" asks poet Muriel Rukeyser. She answers, "The world would split open."² And so we beg women to tell their stories because, in reflection and telling, new depths of understanding are discovered and energies that help break the cycle of alienation are unleashed.

The God Question

The God question, and in particular the question of God's name, receives focused attention when answered from the lips of believing women. Feminist theology brings faith experience in all of its dimensions to conscious and critical reflection. It seeks to uncover sexist readings, symbols, traditions, practices and doctrines that skew what should be good news. Why are many Church doctrines interpreted in ways that suppress and exclude women? Are the traditions hopelessly patriarchal, or can we search for alternative interpretations in Scripture, Church history and women's experience that can shape a theology of wholeness, inclusion and liberation. I believe that, with critical analysis and creative possibilities in view, theology can begin to speak about God, according to the

² Muriel Rukeyser, "Kathe Kollwitz," in Out of Silence, ed. Kate Daniels (Evanston:Ill. TriQuarterly Books, 1992), 132.

feminist model of inclusion and mutuality; this can have practical effect, especially in the area of leadership. Women's feminist experiences must be the basis for such re-interpretation of the tradition for the transformation of religion and culture, as it seeks the dismantling of patriarchy and the promotion of equal justice for the dispossessed, oppressed and poor among us, especially women.

How can a theology of inclusion, wholeness and liberation be shaped? Joyce Rupp gives us some clues. She writes, "Inside each of us there awaits a wonderful spirit of freedom."³ How can we reclaim that freedom? What is God's role in this endeavor? And how is this God named? Hierarchical dualism valuing spirit over body and transcendence over immanence concentrates on one high God who creates by "His" word to the neglect of the indwelling, sustaining presence of God in the whole universe. When this pattern of thought is applied to Trinitarian theology, it keeps the focus on the relation of Father and Son and finds it difficult to deal with the Spirit. Since Spirit is "feminine" in character and often forgotten, the oversight bears influence on women's place in Church and Society.⁴ Indeed, neglect of the Spirit has a symbolic affinity with the marginalization of women, who are likewise overlooked and at times rendered invisible.⁵

³ Joyce Rupp, 61.

⁴ Johnson, Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit, 19.

⁵ Ibid.

It is not so much theology, but the author's own experience as a woman growing up in an Irish Catholic tradition, together with other women's stories of domination, that have led me to questioning whether maleness is the essence of Christian faith and theology. My vision of Church leadership and collaboration has taught me to reject the culturally imposed role of women. Feminist theologians have helped me to shake the spirit loose and re-conceptualize my image of God, my name for God, my understanding of God as Sophia. They have alerted me to the Spirit alive at the heart of the Universe, the whole of creation, moving, communicating, challenging, and confirming the poetic vision of Gerard Manley Hopkins who writes, "the world is charged with the grandeur of God."⁶

God in Feminist Thought

Drawing from the wisdom of Elizabeth Johnson, the author re-images God in feminist language and show how this re-imaging leads persuasively to new forms of Christian leadership and praxis. This re-imagining is ultimately liberating for all creatures, human beings and the earth.

A first step toward the revision of patriarchal God images is to uncover a feminine dimension in God. Rather than merely attributing stereotypical feminine qualities such as those associated with mothering to a male God, this approach seeks a more ontological footing for the existence of the feminine God. The

⁶ Gerard M. Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," in Norton Anthology of Poetry, eds. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter and John Stallworthy, 1062.

doctrine of the Holy Spirit is foundational to this understanding.⁷ In fact, Elizabeth Johnson articulates a theology of the triune God that has its starting point in the experience of the Spirit. The Spirit signifies the active presence and movement of the living God that can be traced in and through the experience of the world.⁸ So present is that Spirit that the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning proclaims, "Earth's crammed with heaven and every common bush is afire with God."⁹

In classical Trinitarian theology, the Spirit is co-equal in nature with the Father and the Son. Biblically, the Spirit is of feminine character, as is seen not only in the feminine gender of the Hebrew ruah, but by the use of the female imagery of the mother bird hovering or brooding to bring forth life. This imagery is also associated with the Spirit of God in creation (Gen. 1:2), and in the baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:2). Early Semitic and Syrian Christians continued to construe the Spirit as feminine, attributing to her the motherly character which certain parts of the Hebrew Scripture had already found in God. The Holy Spirit is the matriarchal aspect of God, who through the waters of baptism initiates new members into Christ's body and brings about the body of Christ through the gift of Eucharist.

⁷ Elizabeth A. Johnson. She Who Is :The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1992), 50.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Aurora Leigh," in Aurora Leigh, ed. Margaret Reynolds (New York: W.W. Norton Co. 1996), 238.

Spirit theology remained in an embryonic state for the first 1500 years of the Church's existence. In fact, the custom of thinking of the Holy Spirit as feminine waned in the West along with the idea of thinking about the spirit at all.¹⁰ The situation was not helped by the Reformation; for while Protestant theology privatized the range of the Spirit's activity, focusing almost exclusively on the justifying and sanctifying work in the life of the individual believer, post-Tridentine Catholic theology institutionalized the Spirit by either tying the Spirit's activity to ecclesiastical office and ordained ministry, or displacing many functions of the Spirit onto the pope, the cult of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Virgin Mary. Even Thomas Aquinas had difficulty with the Spirit and the naming of the Spirit's relationship to the Father and the Son. One source of Aquinas's problem involved the metaphysical concepts of person and being with which he was operating. Since he was of patriarchal origin and predicted less than full personhood for women, he could not bring the personality of the Holy Spirit, which is feminine, fully to expression.¹¹ He struggled with his understanding of the feminine and the female and this had implications for his treatment of Spirit and Spirit theology.

Theologians such as Yves Congar and Jurgen Moltmann, in their works on the Trinity, strive to retrieve the full Trinitarian tradition while overcoming its

¹⁰ Elizabeth A. Johnson, She Who Is, 50.

¹¹ Elizabeth A. Johnson. "The Incomprehensibility of God." Theological Studies 45 (1986): 441-65.

inherent patriarchy by emphasizing the Holy Spirit as the feminine principle of the Godhead. Congar argues that monotheism always leads to patriarchy and male domination; rediscovering the Holy Spirit as maternal gift and inclusive love promotes and affirms the value of women.¹²

Within a Trinitarian construct, the person of the spirit refers primarily to God as present and active in the world and in all of creation as it yearns to be filled with the fullness of God. Spirit-Sophia's action within creation falls into two basic categories. The first is Sophia's vivifying action, the dynamic flow of divine power which sustains the universe, and brings forth life.¹³ This spirit is immanent in the historical world, and celebrated often in the Psalms: "Where can I go from your spirit? Or, where can I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7). Transcendent over the universe, the Spirit embraces the whole world and all find their existence in God. This experience of the Spirit's encompassing presence generates freedom, self-transcendence, and solidarity among all creatures and between God and the world.

The second aspect of the Spirit's action is Sophia's capacity for renewal and empowerment, which takes place on the personal, social and cosmic levels of existence. The incomprehensible God at work in the world, brings us face to face with God's passion for liberation, as She breathes life and spirit into a wounded

¹² Elizabeth A. Johnson. She Who Is, 51, 209.

¹³ Ibid., 135-36.

world. Renewing the face of the earth, the Spirit heals what is broken, brings freedom to captives and God's liberating power to all of creation. Her moving, gracing presence continues to dance and make all things new. Joyce Rupp describes this spirit of freedom: "She waits to dance in the spaces where negative feelings have built barricades and stock piled weapons."¹⁴

Recalling stories of great women and men who have testified to the power of the Spirit, the Biehl family comes to mind. Amy Biehl, a Stanford student went to South Africa to volunteer some time in ministry. While there, she was brutally murdered by the youth she went to serve. Still her parents, through the power of the Spirit, were able to muster up the courage and willingness to forgive. As a testimony to Amy's vision, they established an Amy Biehl Foundation to continue the work of their daughter. A catastrophe that had the potential to embitter was turned around in an act of love and commitment. This had to be of the Spirit — a Spirit that connects, renews and vivifies. This same Spirit was evident in Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who could look at the anguish of human beings in pain and see there the face of Christ.

Theologians such as Sally McFague charge that the amorphous quality of spirit lacks power, stressing divine transcendence while ignoring the more vital characteristics of immanence.¹⁵ While that may have some validity on one level, I believe that Spirit theology calls us to bring together transcendence and

¹⁴ Rupp, 61.

¹⁵ Johnson, She Who Is, 132.

immanence. The God of mystery who is above and beyond us is also at the heart of creation. Spirit theology is a call to reclaim the poet in us and see the secular saturated with the sacred. With Walt Whitman, people might say, "To me, every grain of sand is a miracle."¹⁶ With a great mystical grace, St. Ignatius of Loyola (sixteenth century) received a vision of God and the world that resolved the spirit-matter and contemplation – action dualisms. Ignatius proposed that God is constantly at work in the world and we are invited to "find God in all things." The God of Ignatius is not deistic or remote; rather, God enters the very struggles of human life and labors to share his love.¹⁷

God-Sophia continually works the creation of the world and, in the person of Jesus, works the redemption of women and men. God-Sophia, at the heart of the world, is present yet again through the very particular history of one human being, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the incarnation of God-Sophia in history.¹⁸ Jesus must surely then be one who liberates, renews, connects, encircles and includes; yet our Christologies are often used to dominate, suppress and exclude women. In the Catholic tradition, women are told that they can never be ordained to priestly ministry because the priest must resemble and image Jesus, who was male. Jesus' maleness has been used to reinforce a patriarchal image of

¹⁶ Walt Whitman, "Poem of Perfect Miracles," in Selected Poems, 1855-1892, ed. Gary Schmidgall (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 155.

¹⁷ David Fleming, The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978), 141 no. 236.

¹⁸ Johnson, She Who Is, 150.

God. On the basis of sex, women's voices are silent in many churches. Furthermore, the exclusive use of father and son metaphors, the androcentric overtones of Greek logos language, has led many to conclude that maleness must be an essential characteristic of divine being.¹⁹ Mary Daly analyzes Christian imagery and claims that Christianity is a religion of the Father and the Son and one cannot change the overwhelming patriarchal character of biblical religion. In an often quoted statement, she suggests, "If God is male, then the male is God."²⁰

The fact that Jesus was a man is used to strengthen an androcentric anthropology, as was the belief that special honor and rank is due to the male sex because it was chosen by the Son of God as enfleshment and incarnation of God among us. Historically, as the early Church became inculturated in the Greco-Roman world, it gradually shaped the structures according to the model of the patriarchal household and imperial empire. Jesus was seen as the absolute king of glory whose heavenly reign set up and legitimized the earthly rule of the heads of family, empire, and Church. Thus co-opted into an imperial model, the powerful symbol of the liberating Christ lost its significance. What resulted was a Christology that functioned as a sacred justification for the superiority of men over

¹⁹ Ibid., 152.

²⁰ Mary Daly. Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston : Beacon Press, 1973), 19.

women. The Word made flesh was then related to human beings defined by an androcentric anthropology that saw men as normative and women as derivative.²¹

Elizabeth Johnson calls for a reinterpretation of Jesus' maleness in light of a feminist anthropology, located within an "egalitarian gestalt" of mutuality and reciprocity. Eschewing both the anthropological models of dualism (in which men and women are seen as complimentary but polar opposites), and "single nature" theory (in which the stress on the essential similarity between the sexes is so great that all differences are seen as inconsequential), Johnson suggests a new multipolar model which recognizes "one human nature celebrated in an interdependence of multiple differences."²² In this model, all the various factors constituting personal identity such as age, race, and social location are recognized and celebrated. Jesus' maleness is appreciated as intrinsically important for his identity and ministry, but not theologically determinative of his identity as Christ nor normative for the identity of the Christian community.²³

Through the history and destiny of Jesus of Nazareth, the good news let loose in the struggling world was kept alive by the presence, preaching and ministry of this Jesus. Jesus is Sophia incarnate – the Wisdom of God. Jesus as prophet and child of Sophia preached a message of inclusive love and compassion. He reached out to bring healing, to exorcise, and to invite to the table of

²¹ Johnson, She Who Is, 151.

²² Ibid., 155-56.

²³ Ibid., 156.

fellowship. His message unleashed a hope and a vision, and a present experience of liberating relationships that all persons savor as the antithesis of patriarchy.²⁴

Jesus' message, his inclusion of women in his circle of friends, and his spinning out of female images in his preaching, attest to his radical feminine stance in an overtly patriarchal society. His dying and rising mark him again as Sophia's child. His death and re-birth were a manifestation of divine justice and renewing power, an empowering act which proved that dominating violence could never ultimately triumph over the liberating love of Sophia.²⁵

Using the female figure of personified wisdom to speak about Jesus the Christ offers a wide range of metaphors with which to interpret his saving significance and rootedness in God in ways that relieve the monopoly of the male images of Logos and Son.²⁶ According to Elizabeth Johnson, Sophia's intimate solidarity with the unoriginate God, and her equally compassionate and life-giving solidarity with human beings, whom she makes into friends of God, are embodied in Jesus-Sophia. Such an understanding breaks through the assumption that there is a necessary ontological connection between the male human being Jesus and the male God. This leads to the realization that, as Sophia incarnate, Jesus, even

²⁴ Ibid., 157-58.

²⁵ Ibid., 159.

²⁶ Ibid., 165.

in his human maleness, can be seen as revelatory of the graciousness of God, imaged as female.²⁷

Christ, as the Wisdom of God, in addition to helping us confront sexist Christology, points to other gifts of the Jesus-Sophia tradition. Since Wisdom traditionally relates to the entire cosmos, it follows that a Christology which includes Sophia, moves beyond the human world to include the ecology of the entire earth and indeed the universe. It likewise encourages a global, ecumenical perspective which respects all religious paths, recognizes Sophia present in all races and cultures, and is directed toward the lifting of oppressive structures and enslavements of all kinds.

The drama of Jesus-Sophia highlights fundamental insights important for a theology of God: the transcendent God's capacity for embodiment (an affirmation of the feminist solution of bodiliness) and the Divine passion for liberation, as experienced in Jesus' identity in the Christ. This passion for liberation is expressed in Jesus' solidarity with those who suffer; it is lived out in his profound relatedness to all human beings and to God's own being.²⁸

Feminist hermeneutics have uncovered wonderful insights into the Jesus story as it resists being used to justify patriarchal dominance in any form. Jesus' preaching about the reign of God and his inclusive lifestyle demonstrated the opposite, creating a challenge that brought him into conflict with religious and civil

²⁷ Ibid., 165.

²⁸ Ibid., 156-69.

authority. They crucified him, but Sophia-God raised him to life. Whoever, then, affirms a wisdom Christology is asserting that Sophia, in all her fullness, was in Jesus; thus in his historicity he embodies divine mystery in creative and saving involvement with the world.

Sophia not only shapes our understanding of spirit in the world — spirit incarnate — but stretches us to reconceptualize in feminist language and metaphor, the God whom we traditionally name Father. The absence of maternal metaphors for God is a conscious act of erasure which accompanied the emergence of patriarchy as the dominant ideology within the Christian community, an act sealed by Aquinas' systematic incorporation of faulty Greek biology into his theological anthropology.²⁹ Aquinas adopted the Aristotelian definition of woman as a "misbegotten male" who is supposedly an inferior or defective human species.³⁰ Feminism is an effort to change this perception and to give woman her rightful place in society as a full human being with dignity, intelligence and wisdom — created in God's image and likeness.

What if we named God as Mother/Sophia? How would it change our perceptions, our relationships and our understandings of authority? Naming this absolute mystery of God as Mother/Sophia draws us into the creative power of a God who gives life, who sustains, and who encourages steady growth. In her capacity as Creator, Mother-Sophia is the unoriginate source of everything that

²⁹ Ibid., 173.

³⁰ Ibid.

exists, spirit, matter and embodied spirit alike.³¹ In contrast to classical theistic images of a Creator God who sets things into motion and then exists in a state of eternal, static, immovable repose, Mother-Sophia continues to be intensely involved with creation, caring, fostering and seeking to overcome all that would destroy her beloved creation.³² Furthermore, she is active in establishing the mercy of justice. This justice is inclusive, pertaining not only to God's human children but to all creatures of this planet, present and yet unborn.³³ This ethic of care, championed by God as Mother, places emphasis upon personal responsibility within the context of relationship, rather than on individual rights against the background of others' rights. Thus, the ethic of care underscores the feminist virtues of mutuality and interconnectedness, and shapes a new understanding of divine relationality, mystery and liberating presence.

Feminist Understanding of Power

Feminists believe that an exploration of feminine images of God holds promise and hope for re-interpreting power. They contend that feminist images stretch the imagination, and break the cycle of domination that the exclusive male image projects. Furthermore, making female images of God available may do for women what it has done for men, that is, elevate their self-understanding and

³¹ Ibid., 179-81.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

sense of self. In addition, female images engender a positive and healthy symbolization of human sexuality that is based not on physicality but on the whole person.

Insights from Anna Case-Winter's reconstructed doctrine of God's power can help shape spirit-filled models of leadership. She, too, confronts the traditional male image of God because it legitimizes patriarchy and is often employed to keep women outside the circle of influence. But the problem is more than a language question; it is deeper than that. It deals with the content of the concept of God, which has been "masculinized." Flowing from this understanding is the meaning of power, which seems to underlie the traditional doctrine of divine omnipotence, namely, "power in the mode of domination and control."³⁴ Many feminists support this assertion and insist that this understanding of power is a function of the patriarchal tradition and cannot be rectified by simply changing language.

Drawing upon the scholarship of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Anna Case Winters, asserts that:

Neither male nor female being can be 'whole' in the context of patriarchy. For Ruether the answer lies not in rejecting male notions of power and adopting female ones but in rejecting the larger systemic context of patriarchy and the dualism which is at its root. Only then can wholesome understandings of power be formulated.³⁵

³⁴ Case-Winters, 174.

³⁵ Ibid., 183.

When power in the mode of domination and control is attributed to God, human exercise of power in this mode gains some legitimacy. The negative social consequences are many and include oppression, exploitation, and violence.³⁶

Feminists insist that the tradition's vision of God functions to legitimize the oppression of women: 1) through Scriptural passages suggesting that women's subordinate status is God's will; 2) through male images of God that "deify" the male; 3) through understandings of God as domineering and controlling; and 4) through women's interiorization of patriarchal religion and their subsequent failure to understand self-determination and self-direction.³⁷

Hierarchical dualisms where one reality is juxtaposed against the other – as in God/ world, man/woman, spirit/body – lead people to judge one in each category as superior to the other. In each case, it is assumed that the stronger or superior should exercise rule over the weaker or inferior. God, the supreme power is an example of how the 'superior' is to relate to the 'inferior' and vice versa. This scenario, in which control is the model for how human beings relate to nature, is in direct opposition to Celtic culture where Divine power is understood to be at the heart of nature. Consider this Celtic poem.

There is nothing beneath the sun,
But proclaims his goodness.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., 174.

³⁷ Ibid., 185.

³⁸ Alexander Carmichael, ed., Carmina Gadelica 3 Vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1928-54), 1:39-41.

The connections in this poem, as in feminist interpretations of life and relationships, are ones of reverence and partnership not control or domination. The goddess image of ancient religions provides a needed model of validation of female power. In fact the great St. Brigit of Ireland is associated with the strength and the power of the goddess Brigit.

In the ancient Celtic cultures and also in the transition to Celtic Christianity, one can see the roles and characteristics of the gods and goddesses were not defined according to later stereotypes of masculine and feminine. Elizabeth Johnson asserts that either gender could actually represent the full range of divine attributes and actions. Male and female are equivalent – not complementary – images of the divine. Both gods and goddesses exhibited sexual potency as well as social power.³⁹ Ruether notes, "It is precisely this aspect [of equivalency] that provides the most striking alternative to the symbolic world generated by male monotheism."⁴⁰

In fact, Anne Case Winters points out that the Goddess manifested power in the mode of life-giving and world-generation. The female was revered as the "Giver of Life," for ancient people did not understand biological paternity or the connection between intercourse and conception.⁴¹ The pregnant human female

³⁹ Johnson, She Who Is, 461.

⁴⁰ Rosemary R. Ruether, Sexism and God -Talk:Toward Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 52.

⁴¹ Anna Case-Winters, 192.

was the central metaphor for the powers of life for people who domesticated neither animals nor plants, but were totally dependent on the spontaneous forces of each for gathering food. Furthermore the woman's connection and relation to nature was very evident and spirit and matter were not dichotomized.⁴²

The symbol of the pregnant woman as a life giver and world generator became very expansive as Ruether illustrates:

She is the one within which all things, gods and humans, sky and earth, human and non human beings are generated. Here the divine is not abstracted into some other world beyond this earth but is the encompassing source of new life that surrounds the present world and assures its continuance.⁴³

The pregnant woman, then, stands as a symbol for the wholistic nature of life on earth in which all forms of life are birthed and in partnership.

The theme of relation and connectedness surfaces repeatedly in the writings of feminists, offering a genuinely different approach to thinking about power. Anna Case-Winters summarizes the insights of several feminists when says that the issue is not about control, domination or authority but about our primal interrelatedness. Connection is the basic power of all existence, the root of life.⁴⁴ The character of the operation of divine power in relation is best characterized as

⁴² Rosemary R. Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk, 48.

⁴³ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁴ Case-Winters, 198.

empowerment and synergy; it cooperates with other powers. This divine energy flows within us and around us and is the source of our power.

Celtic Spirituality

Feminist theology and Celtic spirituality share similar interlacing themes of God and humanity, nature and grace, heaven and earth and indeed the interconnectedness of all of life. Standing in opposition to dualistic, hierarchical world-views, both spiritualities image new ways of being and relating. Celtic spirituality, rooted in the Druidic traditions, gives a wisdom that transcends time and space and undergirds more contemporary understandings of feminism and eco-feminism out of which new models of leadership are imaged.

During this writer's recent visit to her homeland – Ireland – she was deeply touched by a visit to Ardmore, County Waterford. There the ruins of a monastery built in memory of St. Declan, (fifth century) stands as a reminder of the faith, ingenuity, and love of nature and beauty possessed by the Celtic spirit. Nestled among trees and shrubs, the ruins of the monastery, overlooks the Irish Sea and is framed in the distance by a lush landscape of some forty shades of green. At the entrance to the monastery, a Holy Well still flows; many come to drink of its clear waters as it is reputed to heal and give solace to the weary traveller. As I knelt to drink from the Well and invited my niece to sip of the refreshing water, I recalled that this ancient custom is passed on from generation to generation; it binds hearts and minds in a circle of relationships. In addition, a rock in the south wall

of the monastery, worn away from constant rubbing by visitors, bears witness to people's desire for connection with the ancestors, especially with the great St. Declan.

In the history of Western civilization, the Celts, unlike the Greeks and Romans, have received little attention. They dominated much of Europe for almost a thousand years, stretching from the Mediterranean to the North Sea and Ireland. Whatever their origins, by 387 B.C.E., they had grown so powerful that some of them threatened Rome itself; by 279, they attacked the Greek oracle at Delphi.⁴⁵ They were a people known for their commitment to tribe and family and for their stalwart courage in battle. Their spiritual leaders and guides were druids and druidesses who, like Native American shamans, functioned as mediators between the tribes and spiritual realms: the world of the tribal Gods, Goddesses and spirits.⁴⁶

The native religion in pre-Christian times was a form of Druid nature mysticism. The people worshipped rivers, ancient trees and sacred groves, mountain tops and hills, streams and holy wells as the dwelling places of divinities and sacred spirits.⁴⁷ Preserving a deep respect for the natural world, they took great care not to pollute water supplies or unnecessarily destroy trees. Their lives were profoundly affected by the beauty all around them, and expressed in their

⁴⁵ Sellner, 4-9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁷ Bradley, 53.

poetry, stories and artwork. It is interesting to note that the Celtic mind and heart bears continuity down through the centuries to which this writer's own memories are testimony. As a young child, I remember strolling through the fields with my father while he alerted me to a sense of God's presence in the bushes, the trees, the grass. John O'Donohue, a contemporary spiritual writer, is so conscious of this pervasive presence that he suggests, the body is in the soul, bathing us in the mystery of God's all encompassing love."⁴⁸ To put it in the words of W.B. Yeats, "All things remain in God."⁴⁹

When Christianity came to these Celtic places we now call Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, Brittany, and the Isle of Man, much of that ancient spirituality was integrated with Christian values and perspectives. This was exhibited in their reverence and respect for nature, and their consciousness of kinship with all of life. Mary Elizabeth Moore notes that the transition into Christianity was smooth – a "meshing" of the new with the old and that this contributed to a continuity which distinguished Celtic Christianity from other branches of the faith that emerged within contexts of persecution and martyrdom.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ John O'Donohue, Anam Cara: A Celtic Book of Wisdom (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 30.

⁴⁹ W. B. Yeats, "Crazy Jane On God," in The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats, ed., Richard J. Finneran (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 263.

⁵⁰ Mary Elizabeth Moore, Ministering with the Earth (St. Louis:Chalice Press, 1998), 138.

According to Edward C. Sellner, a distinct and powerful form of Christianity had emerged in Ireland and the British Isles by the seventh century. While there was much diversity within the universal church from its earliest days – differences rooted in racial, cultural, spiritual and historical developments, which affected the leadership of the local churches and their understanding of Christianity – the early Celtic church was unique.⁵¹ It was greatly influenced by the values of the Celtic pre-Christian culture, as well as ideals of the early desert fathers and mothers of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, who valued a simple lifestyle and the equality of all in the eyes of God. Thus, the Celtic church frequently found itself in conflict with other churches, including the church in Rome, over issues specifically related to church governance and sexuality.⁵²

Many of the other Western churches, adopting and integrating the social structures of the declining Roman empire as their own, divided church territory into dioceses, headed by Bishops who lived primarily in urban areas.⁵³ The Celtic church, which had a more flexible structure, competed with the Roman taste for more structured administration. Church personnel, such as bishops and priests,

⁵¹ Sellner, Wisdom of The Celtic Saints, 17.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

became less associated with rule and administrative function, and more with spirituality and ministry that was not tied to a fixed location.⁵⁴

The early Celtic church was located more often in rural or remote areas and influenced by the tribal system of the pre-Christian Celts. Monasteries, rather than parishes, became the basic units of the church, and monastic leaders who emerged at the great Celtic monasteries were eventually more powerful than the bishops who lived in their midst. Even when leadership was limited to celibates or the ordained, the monasteries themselves had many lay people (known as *manaigh*) attached to them.⁵⁵ These monastic centers were like cities and were places not only of worship and prayer but also of commerce, agriculture, recreation and education.⁵⁶ Space surrounded by the outer wall was considered sacred and was honored as a place of sanctuary. As a local church, they corresponded in some ways to the parishes of our own time.

Celibate members within the monastic communities, as well as lay people, experienced the fruits of collaboration so that the resulting community was non-hierarchical; the gift and presence of women were recognized and honored and they were considered to have many of the same rights as men.⁵⁷ Education,

⁵⁴ Philip Sheldrake, Living Between Worlds : Place and Journey in Celtic Spirituality (Cambridge, Mass: Cowley Publications, 1995), 5.

⁵⁵ Edward C. Sellner, Wisdom of the Celtic Saints, 17.

⁵⁶ Timothy J. Joyce, Celtic Christianity: A Sacred Tradition, A Vision of Hope (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), 36.

⁵⁷ Sellner, Wisdom of the Celtic Saints, 19.

pastoral care, and liturgical leadership were provided either by the monks or women religious; in turn lay people and their families helped the monasteries grow their crops, manage their farms, fish, plant trees and keep their bees. All benefitted from this mutual sharing of gifts, including those who only came for a short stay. The monastic environment was non-violent and its welcoming doors were a sign of hospitality. This was a church in action and its missionary activity focused on the poor, the outcasts and the insignificant.

Differences between Roman style and Celtic churches emerged over time as the Roman Empire was torn apart by the invading Germanic tribes. The tribes included the Anglo-Saxons who invaded Britain in the fifth century, driving many Celts back into those geographical areas now identified as Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall.⁵⁸ While other ecclesial bodies came to value large churches and basilicas for their communal prayer experiences, the Celtic Church built small, intimate ones of wood, and later stone.⁵⁹ Even when the membership in the monasteries increased, the Celtic Christians, wanting to maintain greater intimacy and relationship among their members, continued to build more numerous and smaller church dwellings rather than larger structures for worship.⁶⁰ Also, as the continental churches grew increasingly more materialistic, dressing their bishops in

⁵⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

fine vestments and having them ride on golden thrones, the Celtic church valued a more ascetic, simple life-style.⁶¹

Inspired by stories of the desert father St. Anthony (251-356) and the Anchorite Bishop of Tours, St. Martin (316-397), the Celtic church was characterized by intense missionary outreach, and a pastoral ministry among the common people.⁶² Their simplicity of life, undaunted enthusiasm for ministry, and desire for connectedness are legacies with potential to transform contemporary church structures and relationships.

While the other Christian churches increasingly isolated women from positions of authority and from friendship with males, the Celtic church, influenced by the pre-Christian Celts' belief that women were equal to men and had similar legal rights, encouraged their leadership.⁶³ Contrary to the prevailing dualistic tendencies among desert Christians and the inhabitants of countries bordering on the Mediterranean, the early founders of the Celtic church "did not reject the service and society of women."⁶⁴ This is documented in a ninth century manuscript, Catalogue of the Saints of Ireland. Indeed, women were valued and

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

not ignored, judging from one of the earliest mythologies, that of Gorman, which lists over 200 female saints.⁶⁵

Monastic communities of women and men, which arose in Ireland shortly after the death of Patrick in 461, were headed by women who held powerful ecclesial positions. These "double monasteries," housing men and women in separate quarters, were evidently a normal feature of the earliest monastic life in Ireland and England.⁶⁶ The most well known abbesses presiding over these double monasteries were Brigit, who founded a community at Kildare, Ireland, and Hildegard of Whitney, Northumbria.⁶⁷ The early biographies of Brigit, as well as the stories of Hildegard, show clearly that these powerful abbesses exercised such a tremendous influence on their times that they had no parallel in later history, except perhaps Hildegard of Bingen in twelfth century and Teresa of Avila in the sixteenth.⁶⁸

St. Brigit, the most famous female leader of the early Celtic church, lived in Ireland about 452-524. Nuns at her monastery in Kildare are said to have kept an eternal flame burning there, a custom that may have originated with female druids residing at that spot long before the saint arrived.⁶⁹ Fire was very significant in

⁶⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 69-70.

Celtic times; the domestic fire was never allowed to go out except at the ritual rekindling of the fire of Beltane, when everyone brought a brand of the hill Uisnech to relight their homes from the royal fire kindled by the king's druid⁷⁰ It is alleged that the Paschal fire kindled at Easter services is rooted in this Celtic tradition.

St. Brigit, the great leader and soul friend, supposedly was a high priestess who bore the name of the goddess Brigit, a deity of wisdom, poetry, fire and hearth.⁷¹ Worship of the goddess Brigit was transformed into veneration of St. Brigit around whom many legends gathered and whose feastday, February 1st, came to be celebrated on the same day as that of the pagan goddess.

Brigit stands on the boundaries between pagan mythology and Christian spirituality, and she is known for many leadership traits: patience, prayerfulness, inclusivity, and most of all compassion toward the poor and ailing.⁷² Her Celtic outlook articulated the embrace of nature, deity, the underworld and the human world as one. She stands as symbol and challenge for contemporary Christians to reclaim the richness of the past and weave it into newness in response to the needs of the future.⁷³

⁷⁰ Caitlin Matthews and John Matthews, The Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1994), 16.

⁷¹ Sellner, Wisdom of the Celtic Saints, 6.

⁷² Ibid., 69.

⁷³ Ibid., 71-72.

Tradition has it that, when Brigit was receiving a virgin's veil from Bishop Mel, the form of ordaining a Bishop was mistakenly read, thus conferring Episcopal power on her. Whether this is legend or reality, it points to the fact that Brigit's leadership abilities and strength of character were acknowledged and celebrated in the early Celtic community.

Despite the submission of the Celtic church in Ireland by the Roman ecclesial system in the twelfth century, Celtic Christian spirituality survived in various geographical locations where the saints had once lived or journeyed. Directly or indirectly, it deeply affected certain religious traditions and wisdom figures and its influence continues right to this moment. Like the pagan ancestors who worshipped the earth-goddess Anu as a source of fertility, Celtic Christians revered the earth as a life-giving mother.⁷⁴

The tradition still has special appeal for all concerned about ecology and the human connection to all of life. We know that one of the primary characteristics of Celtic Christian spirituality was a love for the physical environment. The early Celtic Christian's daily life was lived in close proximity to nature, and their spirituality reflected a sense of wonder and awe at the divine residing in everything, as this hymn of praise proclaims:

There is nothing beneath the sun
But proclaims his goodness.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ John M. Jones, With an Eagle's Eye :A Seven Day Sojourn in Celtic Spirituality (Notre Dame, Ind: Ave Maria Press, 1998), 95.

⁷⁵ Carmichael, 1: 41.

Influenced by their pagan spirituality, Celtic Christians found it natural to address God as "Lord of the elements" and to experience communion with God in their natural surroundings.⁷⁶ The intimate relationship described between human beings and creation, and the dynamic relationship within the triune God-Father, Son and Spirit, come to expression in "The Three" – a poem from a collection of ancient prayers and poems, published by Alexander Carmichael in *Carmina Gadelica*.

The Three Who are in heaven
The Three who are in the great pouring sea.⁷⁷

An attitude of deep respect for the environment was also manifest in quiet care for all things living. The Celtic saints seem to have a special affinity and reciprocal relationship with animals. While at prayer, Kevin shelters in his hands a blackbird which probably sang for him; Ciaran meets a wild boar that helps him clear land for his monastery; and Columcille's white horse sheds great tears of sadness at his master's approaching death. Animals are portrayed as fellow creatures of the earth, and once befriended, they become helpers and friends to the saints.⁷⁸

The artwork which the Celts left as legacy to posterity is also full of the wonders and beauty of creation. The book of Celts, now housed at Trinity

⁷⁶ Sellner, Wisdom of the Celtic Saints, 14.

⁷⁷ Carmichael, 3: 93.

⁷⁸ Sellner, Wisdom of the Celtic Saints, 12.

College Dublin, is a wonderful example of the Celtic resonance with nature, revealed in stories and imagery. Intended for use on the altar, and filled with hundreds of marvelous Christological images, this Latin text of the four Gospels is considered the most lavishly decorated of all Gospel texts, with not one of its 680 large folios lacking vivid decoration.⁷⁹ Many of the Celtic illuminated manuscripts are made up of exquisite intertwining patterns of fruit and foliage. The crossing and weaving of lines, without discernible start or finish, symbolizes the integrity of the whole and represents God without beginning or end. This suggests that all of God's creation interlaces and is an embodiment of the creator. Creation, therefore, is holy. All of life is holy, and the linkage of things with the Holy can be read as the ongoing process of creation and redemption.⁸⁰

Strong human relationships were natural to Celtic Christians; they valued kinship, friendship and community. The communitarian nature of their monastic cities placed emphasis on communal sharing and an understanding that the land and their holdings belonged to all who lived together. John O'Riordan notes that, the Irish language has no word for "private property" and no verb for possess. He says, "The term for one's property is *mochuid* – my portion; the underlying social

⁷⁹ Jones, 70.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 93.

and legal position being that the wealth of the community was owned by the community and out of that resource each got enough to live."⁸¹

Flowing from this communitarian sense was a great care and concern for the poor. The poor were always welcomed to the monastery, where they received food and shelter. The welcome to the one in need challenges our ministry sense at the turn of a millennium to keep widening our circles of outreach and inclusion. Gratefully, the spirit of hospitality continues in Celtic cultures. The "cup of tea" always offered to friend and stranger is symbolic of this spirit and a source of inspiration.

Intimacy with the triune God, who is the ultimate ground and model of community, held a special place in Celtic spirituality. It was the primary way in which Celtic poets and artists understood the Godhead. A short hymn or rune was frequently sung before prayer, invoking Father, Son and Spirit:

In the eye of the Father who created me
In the eye of the Spirit who cleansed me. ⁸²

God was so involved in their ways of being and relation that all their salutations were blessings and reminders of God's presence. On meeting, the common salutation was "May God and Mary be with you," and the response, "May God, Mary and St. Patrick be with you." Rich poetic prayers were intermingled

⁸¹ John O'Riordan, The Music of What Happens (Winona, Minn: St. Mary's Press, 1996), 69.

⁸² Oliver Davies and Fiona Bowie, eds., "Rune Before Prayer," in Celtic Christian Spirituality: An Anthology of Medieval and Modern Sources (London: SPCK, 1995), 89.

with the mundane duties of Celtic people. For example, when kindling a fire they prayed:

I will kindle my fire this morning
In the presence of the holy angels of heaven.⁸³

God was never far away from the Celtic mind and heart. In fact, there was no escaping God, who was experienced at the center of all deliberations and relationships. The Church appears to have been less patriarchal than matriarchal; women's gifts were recognized and leadership roles were given to them. The Celtic understandings of interrelationship, power and ministry have much to teach our contemporary Church, and leadership is well advised to listen to its wisdom.

Implications for Leadership

Feminist and Celtic worldviews have much to offer a world bent on domination, competition, individualism and destruction. When themes, such as "power with," interconnection, relationship, and compassion are integrated into parish structures, inclusive, collaborative models of leadership take shape. Power is usually understood in feminism as "power with" – in relation to, and not over and above, another human being, animal, nature. It is energy at the heart of the world calling for reverence and deep respect for the earth, the animals, human beings. Built on solidarity rather than dualism, it discourages independent, lone-ranger types of mentality. It challenges people to discernment and communal

⁸³ "Blessing of the Kindling" in Carmina Gadelica, ed. Carmichael, 1: 82.

decision making, thus generating an open, trusting, receptive stance that searches for communal truth and reveres the wisdom of all. The gift of each person is a resource rather than a threat. In feminist spirituality, power is an instrument for social good, seeking to avoid oppression, exploitation and violence.

Power has something to do with self-realization, development and growth in freedom, but nothing to do with aggrandizing the self by suppressing others. Real feminism does not reject or abrogate power, but recognizes the role of leadership and the need for power. Power is a very positive reality. and leaders who use power for the empowerment and good of the community do wonderful ministry. The work of Jean Vanier, for example, attests to his passion for the development and support of the mentally disabled. He utilized his power and position to establish several L'Arche Communities in Canada and France, seeking to serve the needs of these people, and empower and give them a sense of dignity. His healing, caring, gentle leadership has done wonders in the lives of many.

The spirituality of empowerment treats power as a sacred trust and gives it away with holy abandonment. Seeking always the growth of another, it makes itself unnecessary and leads all to be on the side of the poor and in the midst of the oppressed; it is the way of Jesus who said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the Reign of God." It is the gospel vision of servant leadership that confronts the diligent mother who requests that her sons sit at the right and the left of Jesus. Jesus responds to the request by setting a child in their midst as an example of real power, a reminder for all leaders to have child-like attitudes of

trust, dependence, and connection. Letty M. Russell points out that, in feminist perspective, there are never too many leaders, for power is not understood as a game that requires competition and hoarding in order to win. Rather, power and leadership gifts multiply as they are shared, and more and more persons become partners in building communities of faith and struggle.⁸⁴

Reflecting on Scripture with feminist hermeneutics makes it possible to declare that, despite distortions down through the centuries, something more than the marginalization of women is possible. Jesus-Sophia's story of victory over death signifies love, grace and liberation for everyone equally and for the outcasts, including women. If wisdom herself became a human being, then the very matter of creation in the flesh of humanity and in women's own bodies belongs to her and is precious to her. There can be no dichotomy between matter and spirit, of treasuring one over the other, but matter itself is a gift related to God. Resurrection announces that this will always be so, for the body itself is glorified in the power of Wisdom's spirit. Recognizing that the beaten and broken body of Jesus has been raised, gives Christians hope for a future for all the dead, and especially for those who are abused, tortured and unjustly treated. Wisdom's gift is ultimately life in abundance and liberation for all.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Letty M. Russell, Church in The Round, 56.

⁸⁵ Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Redeeming the Name of Christ: Freeing Theology," in Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspectives, ed. Catherine M. La Cunga (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 132.

Women who have lost a sense of self, whose voices are muted, whose stories bear resemblance to the story of Jane and the children in Zambia (described in the introduction), begin to find hope as they courageously reject patriarchy. In letting go of patriarchal images of God as Father and images of themselves as less than and subservient to men, they find freedom. Trusting in Spirit/Sophia, "who waits to dance in the corners where we still do not believe in our goodness,"⁸⁶ they gain the strength to acknowledge their own goodness and self-worth.

Anyone who thinks this path is easy must know that the destruction of these images of oneself and of God can lead to an experience of nothingness, as described by Mary Daly and others. Because of this experience, women know that they cannot take the journey toward conversion alone. They need the support of a loving community of equals who dare to speak the truth in love. The gift and the power to name the world has been taken away from women. Today, women seek to reclaim their freedom, and this freedom is more than a civic right. It is a profound human right to give names to the world and especially to name God-Sophia, Jesus-Sophia, Mother-Sophia.

In the tradition of Jesus' visionary leadership, feminist interpretation of Church leadership calls into question privilege, power, domination, exclusion. The overcoming of the contradictions points us back to the origins of Spirit-filled

⁸⁶ Rupp, 61.

communities, and also forward to a time when interconnectedness is recognized among all those who share new life in Christ.

Latin American liberation theologians have long insisted that authentic ecclesiological reflection on experience must emerge out of the life of the community. Theology will follow practice. Feminist theologians endorse this direction, understanding that this new church must include the experience of women and other persons marginalized by the present power structure. The liberating message of Sophia-Jesus, spoken into their experiences, calls the church to transformation of attitudes, images, symbols and structures that hold persons captive. The cry, "Fix us, Jesus" resounds in such settings, and the gifts of all are called forth and celebrated. A new church begins its birthing process in fidelity to the original inspiration of Jesus-Sophia.

Leadership infused with the Spirit of God in the world, deconstructs dualism and draws in its place a circle of mutuality and inclusiveness. The circulation of life and spirit on the earth is choked off by the separation of people, one from another. Efforts to reach across barriers are contributions to peace and solidarity. Peace comes from hands reaching out and joining each other across boundaries that separate. I recall a wonderful experience of inclusivity when a group of Hispanic, African American and Asian Pacific persons gathered to celebrate a sending rite at the conclusion of a week's seminar on multiculturalism. Together they created a beautiful, culturally sensitive prayer experience incorporating rich symbols and imagery from each culture. The whole

celebration showed the possibilities that are there when gifts and talents are woven together to create newness.

Conversion toward the earth comes from a feminist worldview. Elizabeth Johnson writes:

We must leave a dualistic model for a kinship one, seeing every creature linked to each other and to God in the dance of the universe. We must transform a culture that is spreading death to one that cherishes life. Simply put, all of us, women and men alike, need to fall in love with the earth as an inherently valuable, living community in which we participate and be creatively faithful to it.⁸⁷

In these words, Johnson calls us to contemplate the earth, to have the eye and the heart of the mystic and to experience the connectedness of all things in Sophia.

The earth has a message for us and we must listen deeply to its call.

Symbol systems, Carol P. Christ argues, cannot simply be rejected they must be replaced. Where there is not any replacement, the mind will revert to familiar structures at times of crisis, battlements or defeat.⁸⁸ God-Sophia, Jesus-Sophia, Mother-Sophia language shifts the emphasis away from patriarchal symbols to more inclusive, liberating ones, which are similar to those experienced in the Celtic tradition.

⁸⁷ Johnson. Woman, Earth, and Creator Spirit, 62.

⁸⁸ Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds. "Feminist Spirituality, Christian Identity and Catholic Vision," in Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion (Harper & Row, 1979), 140.

Feminist thought and Celtic spirituality have the potential to transform leadership structures, relationships and ways of ministering. Both spiritualities conjure up images of interlocking circles, reaching out to enable, empower and include. This reaching out stance is key, especially since circles can also enclose or limit. Faithfulness to Christ challenges all to welcome the stranger, the one in need. The author recalls her father, Irish by birth and one who embraced a feminist worldview. Often on cold evenings, homeless people came to our door, begging for shelter. Without a thought, a question, my father always invited them in to rest for the night and to share breakfast the next morning. His stance was one of inclusion, connection, and hospitality so typical of the Celtic spirit. The challenge for leadership today is to foster such relationships, extend compassion, and create solidarity among all creatures and between God and the world. *All are Welcome*, ought to be our motto, as the verse so beautifully reads:

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
all are welcome, all are welcome
all are welcome in this place.⁸⁹

The journey toward liberation, interconnectedness, and welcoming is a long and arduous one, but people gain hope in community. The poet Denise Levertov writes:

⁸⁹ Marty Haugen, "All Are Welcome," All Are Welcome (Chicago: GIA Publications, 1995), compact disc 327. Used with permission.

To expand again, to plunge our dryness
into the unwearied source but not to forget.⁹⁰

As people touch into the source, they are reminded that all are part of a great cycle of giving birth and rebirth. The call is to join in a communion of struggle and help nurture buds of new life and bring them to full flower.

Conclusions

Learnings gleaned from feminist and Celtic spirituality help inform and give shape to leadership models for the future.

- The feminist understanding of God/Sophia highlights the virtues of mutuality, relationship and interconnectedness, and these are essential for building partnership.
- Standing in opposition to dualistic, hierarchical world-views, feminist theology and Celtic spirituality image ways of being and relating which are fundamental to the development of leadership for the future.
- A re-constructed doctrine of God and Power helps break the cycle of domination. "Power with" discourages an independent, lone ranger mentality and challenges all to authentic discernment and decision making.
- The Celtic mind offers much to a contemporary understanding of ministry and leadership. Believing that women were equal to men and

⁹⁰ Denise Levertov, "Prologue: An Interim," in Poems 1968-1972 (New York: New Directions Publishing), 136.

had similar rights, they encouraged women's leadership and involvement. For example, monastic communities of women and men which arose after the death of St. Patrick in 461 were headed by women, who held powerful positions. Their vision and initiative offers encouragement and challenges for contemporary leaders to develop inclusive models of parish leadership.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING A MODEL OF INCLUSIVE, PARTICIPATIVE CHURCH LEADERSHIP

St. Monica's has much to teach about a parish's effort to listen and respond to the needs of people. It gives glimpses into what innovative leadership can accomplish, how it co-ops the energy and enthusiasm of a community and invites followership. Taking the necessary wisdom from this experience and expanding its horizon through integrating values from feminist and Celtic traditions with congregational resources, I will develop principles and components for a model of leadership. Such a model will challenge parishes and leaders of communities to carve out new modes of operating and serving the needs of the Church of the twenty-first Century.

Foundational Principles and Components

The vision of a transformational partnership model of leadership is a dream, and the first step towards its achievement is the willingness of leadership to confront basic fundamental principles, such as:

- 1) De-clericalizing church structures
- 2) Building ecclesiology on "communio" and service
- 3) Drawing upon woman's ways of leadership

4) Building power and authority in community

A transformational, participative style of leadership will flow from these foundational principles and values, giving birth to new ways of leading communities of faith.

At the heart of this shift, people recognize a new vision taking shape, a vision whose contours bear the marks of women's minds, hearts and aspirations. I believe that the inclusion of women will affect Church leadership in areas such as the formation of community, empowerment, decision making, and building more inclusive structures. Indeed, the traditional clerical patriarchal model will be replaced with new images and new ways of proceeding.

I propose that the image of interlocking circles will hold relationships, ministries, and processes in a unity that honors diversity. Facilitating dialogue and creating synergy, these circles of power and relationship will move the group forward as one body. The proposed vision seeks to replace exclusionary and exploitative structures with ones based on principles of justice, reciprocity and inclusion.

Declericalizing Church Structures

A very important step in developing any new model of leadership is ministry to the structures already in place. It is here that the wisdom of women opens new paths and enlightens people's steps. Rhodes in her book, Co-creating: A Feminist Vision of Ministry, maintains that an evolving style of feminist ministry

is organized contextually and defined by its vision. Similar to other liberation theologians, feminist theologians emphasize a ministry oriented toward the mission of the Church, seeking to address particular contexts in light of their analysis of God's intent for the world.¹

Since women function from context and not from pre-ordained order, their visions confront the clerical patriarchal structures and call for transformation. Women emphasize the contextual aspect of their ministry and prefer not to be "set apart" from their congregations, since they develop relationships among the people as those who share their baptism and commitment to service.² A feminist model of leadership will emphasize baptism of all the members and will educate and empower all to assume their Christian responsibility in the world.

A Church holding a dualistic view of sexuality and spirituality is challenged by women in leadership, and also by leadership teams who confront the myth that identifies women with sexuality and body and men with spirit and intellect.³ By their very being, women call old ways of thinking into question and, in the process, minister to unjust structures. A model of leadership that affirms Spirit-Sophia's activity at the heart of the universe puts women and men in relationships of mutuality and breaks down old categories of superiority and privilege. The

¹ Lynn N. Rhodes, Co-Creating : A Feminist Vision of Ministry (Philadelphia: Westminster press, 1987), 17-18.

² Russell, Church in the Round, 33.

³ Ibid., 52.

proposed circular model has no top or bottom rungs, but rather interlocking and overlapping relationships.

In his book, The Shape of the Church to Come, Karl Rahner proposed that "the Church of the future shall be a de-clericalized Church and it must grow in its reality quite differently from the past, from below, from groups of those who have come to believe as a result of their own, free, personal decision."⁴ Office will be respected in such a vision but it will not be set apart, or over and above; it will be one with the community, listening interpreting and seeking to obey God at the center of the universe, the world, the parish and the community.

According to patriarchy, men are higher human beings than women. Patriarchal attitudes deny women the right to use their bodies and their minds. Ranking and ordering everything, these attitudes gather power to the top or pass it down in gradual decreasing doses.⁵ Clerical structures continue to reinforce structures of hierarchy and domination, whether or not the particular clergy person is male or female.

When Constantine made the Christian Church the official religion of the empire, the Christian ministry (ministry = clergy) was established as a social caste, and it received the privilege traditionally reserved for the priesthood of the official

⁴ Karl Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 57.

⁵ Chittister, 26-27.

cultus.⁶ This caste system has been maintained by a sexist and patriarchal hierarchy which, despite many revolts against the Church hierarchies, continues to be modeled after the ruling classes of society.⁷ We must remember that the Church underwent an evolution that centralized power in the hands of a male clergy, who exercised it in ways reminiscent of the imperial leaders of the Roman Empire. Once beyond the apostolic age, the Church became a stratified household, in which wives, women and slaves were to be obedient and submissive. Gender qualifications became more important than spiritual giftedness in determining ministry and leadership.⁸

For parishes of the future, these "set apart" clerical roles need to be relegated, and whole communities must be called forth and empowered to live out their Baptismal promises. It is these patriarchal structures that women's presence confront. Women do not want simply to take their place in an unchanged bureaucratic maze. Rather, they seek to challenge church polity, liturgical rites, the language used to speak of God, and ideas about sexuality, authority and appropriate relationship in community. They want to confront and disrupt dominance rather than assume it.⁹ In so doing, they are paving the way for leadership to function as partners and co-creators.

⁶ Rosemary Radford Ruether, New Woman, New Earth (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis 1970), 70.

⁷ Ibid., 74.

⁸ Ashe, 134.

⁹ Ibid., 138.

Feminism and Celtic spirituality require us to stop thinking in ladders. To the Celts, the whole universe is interconnected and the Celtic cross symbolizes the connection. The circle around the juncture of the horizontal and vertical bars of the cross is both sign of the cosmic Christ and the earth itself, drawn together in a circle of mutuality and relationship. To the feminist, people are not up and down, disposable or valuable, higher or lower than others. All are simply defined parts of the human enterprise, each one making a critical contribution to a common goal: the development of humankind. Imaging the concept of parish as an interlocking set of circles frees people; it enables everyone to think wider thoughts.

An interconnected vision of leadership finds grounding and support in the Celtic church, where monastic communities rather than parishes were the basic units of structure. An Abbot or Abbess was the administrative leader of the Community and eventually they were more powerful than the bishops who lived there. While other Christian Churches isolated women from positions of authority, the Celtic church, influenced by pre-Christian Celts' belief that women were equal to men, encouraged women's leadership. Furthermore, the Celtic tradition was very communal, expressing a horizontal equality and de-emphasizing vertical, in favor of horizontal differences. Men and women tended to be more equal than in the Roman experience and clergy and lay people enjoyed close ties. The Bishop was primarily an evangelizer, leading his priests in works of spreading the gospel,

but he remained a member of the local community of which the Abbott or Abbess was the administrative head.¹⁰

Building Ecclesiology on "Communio"

Building relationships and sharing some dimension of a communal life-style are critical for developing participative leadership teams. In a circle of mutuality, it is conceivable that the parish of the future will develop new ways of living and working together. Just as the Celtic monasteries shared a horizontal equality, so it is conceivable that parish staffs of the future may take the best of monastic life-style and develop some communal aspect to their shared experiences. This would bring women and men, lay and clerics, together in commitment to a common purpose and vision, all struggling to be at the service of the Reign of God.

Building relationships starts with reflection upon life experiences, and the sharing of stories of faith and struggle. Feminist theologians find their sense of authority and conviction rooted in their experience. Rhodes writes "Experience is tested, examined, made meaningful within one's use of reason, tradition, and other people's experience, but the starting point is honoring the validity of one's own experience."¹¹ On a practical level it is clear that an infusion of this feminist experiential thrust calls a community to vulnerability, to sharing weaknesses as

¹⁰ Joyce, 150.

¹¹ Rhodes, 31.

well as strengths, to a kind of integrity that moves a group forward, and in time bonds them. People are formed within a network, not as autonomous beings but as individuals whose very sense of self is informed and shaped in relationship to others, the earth and experiences of God.¹²

The model of leadership that I am proposing must respect the role of community and the formational power of relationships. This calls for the establishment of processes of trust building and good listening so that people who share their deep vulnerability and convictions are not wounded or held in contempt.¹³

As people vision parish leadership models for the future, wisdom from the Celtic and feminist perspectives can move them in the direction of partnership and inclusion. Such models emphasize community and service, honor the gifts of women, and integrate many expressive dimensions into an encompassing vision. Additionally, feminist thought confronts the core of patriarchy, and in so doing, frees up mindsets and helps birth more interdependent leadership teams.

Drawing Upon Women's Ways of Leadership

The Christian story leads people to experience Jesus as one who laid claim to a vision for a new humanity—a humanity that had the possibility of going ahead a future, as yet unrealized. Specifically he called for a different order of things, an

¹² Ibid., 34.

¹³ Ibid.

order he named the Reign of God.¹⁴ This vision of a New Order inspires vision of future directions for parish leadership. Women's ways of leadership as recounted in the Hebrew and Christian traditions, show that leadership bearing the marks of women's minds, hearts and sensibilities have the potential to transform structures and build relationships. People are especially inspired by the stories of women whose lives bear testimony to strength of character and steadfastness in the face of opposition.

Strength, Forthrightness and Endurance. The strength and forthrightness of Miriam's leadership in Numbers 12:2-14 and 20:1-2. attests to her breadth of vision and concern for inclusion. With Aaron she confronts Moses for refusing to share the prophetic role, saying "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" (Num. 12: 2-14). Miriam gave us an example of courage in the face of patriarchal authority. She was aware of the Spirit in her own life and at the heart of the community, and appeared to claim her prophetic role, advocating for a more inclusive form of leadership.¹⁵

Furthermore, we discover that Miriam's leadership strengthened the community. Although the patriarchal writers discriminated and inflicted pain on this woman, the community of Israel did not abandon her. When she was shut outside the camp for seven days, the people waited until she was "brought in again." Miriam was stricken with leprosy and continued to suffer this living death,

¹⁴ Ibid., 54.

¹⁵ Russell, Church in the Round. 68-69.

but they journeyed with her until, like Moses and Aaron, she died before seeing the Promised Land. The pain and struggle that the people experienced with Miriam helped form and bond the community.¹⁶

Paradoxically, the weakness of a community often forges the strongest bonds of solidarity and unity. The weakness and poverty of persons' lives call them to rely on a power – a Spirit greater than themselves who will steer them home. Parish leadership models are strengthened, connected and empowered by the gift of mutual vulnerability and the commitment to form community.

Drawing from Local Wisdom. Wisdom figures, such as Brigit from the Celtic tradition, also witness to the power and influence of women. The figure of Brigit is part history, and part mystery. Known as "Mary of the Gaels," she may be seen as one who in her very person demonstrated a definitive feature of the Celtic Christian Church, that is, its ability to be thoroughly inculturated into the local scene, in this case by assimilating many of the pre-Christian Celtic customs.¹⁷ Brigit was a strong independent woman and the head of a dual monastery with a Bishop as her co-adjutor. She represented a positive role of women in leadership.¹⁸

Reforming Structures. The Christian story gives other examples of women's reforming influence on the structure of the Church and Church

¹⁶ Ibid., 69.

¹⁷ Joyce, 45.

¹⁸ Ashe, 131.

authorities. Catherine of Siena dared to enter the embroiled civil and religious politics of 14th Century Italy. Moreover, Teresa of Avila's vision and conviction helped reform the Carmelite Order, leaving a strong imprint on the history of spirituality and life of the Church.

Interrelating and Empowering. Catholics and Christians in general, are not alone in their search for new leadership styles, especially those that are inclusive, interrelated and empowering. The corporate world is intent on moving away from the authority models that were standard in the industrial age, governed by self-made men perched at the top of clearly delineated chains of command.¹⁹ Interestingly, many of the values considered indispensable for the transformation of business organizations, are also foundational to women's experience and feminist thought. Women in leadership are more likely to see themselves at the center of an organizational web rather than at the top of a pyramid of power. They tend to see co-workers as partners in a common enterprise, deserving of trust and respect, rather than as competitors to be kept off balance and viewed with fear and suspicion. Today, women in their relationship to Church authority are influenced by movements in the corporate world impelling them to self-definition, self-creation, and self-confidence.²⁰

Resisting and Renewing. In particular, women religious in the wake of Vatican II have forged ahead and have effected renewal and the re-founding of

¹⁹ Ibid., 131.

²⁰ Ashe, 125.

religious life. They have taken the vision of Vatican II to heart and have made significant inroads into the place of women in the Church. The process of renewal has awakened in them a strong sense of their identity as women and as responsible moral agents and decision-makers.²¹ These efforts have, at times, brought them into confrontive relationships with Church authority; still women have paved a path for honest confrontation and challenge to systems of domination and oppression. Their courage and conviction have led them respectfully to disagree and to raise consciousness. I am reminded here of Sister Teresa Kane's encounter with Pope John Paul II in 1979 as she greeted him and then publicly raised the question of women's ordination. This courageous act got her into trouble with Church authorities and yet it was symbolic of women's resistance, refusing to remain "silent" on issues that touch the heart and soul of the Community of Faith.

I believe that women's voice and vision will give shape to models of inclusive leadership. Sr. Helen Prejean in the movie "Dead Men Walking" attests to the vision and strength of one woman's efforts to oppose the death penalty. So often she stood alone in facing opposition from the church, civil authorities and members of the local community, especially from families whose loved ones were victims of violence, abuse and rape. Without minimizing the crimes, atrocities and pain inflicted on others, Helen Prejean, convinced of the sacredness of all life,

²¹ Ibid ., 125.

fought against the death penalty. She stood in solidarity both with the victims of crime and the oppressors. Her leadership was relational, intimate, reconciling and committed to affirm the giftedness of all of life, thus creating a sense of community and responsibility.

Building Power and Authority in Community

Central to any new model of leadership is the question of power and authority and how it is understood and exercised. Vatican II called for decentralization, dialogue and consultation; there have been significant strides in that direction in the intervening years. St. Monica's experience is a good example of such efforts. Real attempts are made to involve many persons in the decision-making processes through delegation and empowerment; still there are areas of control and power tinged with patriarchal influences and mindsets that need renewal. Women's vision and thought have not as yet adequately penetrated structures and transformed practices developed over centuries.

Christian feminists, in both their reading of Scripture and their interpretation of the present moment of history, call for people to rethink what constitutes power, authority, and leadership. If the Christian community is to thrive and develop, power must be understood not as something to be hoarded, but as something to be given away.²² The gospels' overriding values in the

²² Ibid., 145.

example of Jesus are those of freedom and service without domination. The early Christians witness to the possibility of free, egalitarian, inclusive communities, where the needs of one became the concern of the whole community. "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as they had need" (Acts 2: 44-46).

What does a model of leadership where power and authority are exercised in "communio" look like? First, we can say that chains of command give way to circles – circles that interlock, converge, and connect. The familiar ranking – God first, then angels, men, women, animals and rocks – break down into a network of interdependence.²³

Second, the model needs a team in which one or more persons have visionary, relational leadership skills and others have management gifts. For a leadership team to exist, both leader and manager must exercise reciprocal authority/power; that is, they must be aware that they need each other and express this openly in dialogue.²⁴ A significant factor contributing to the collapse of intentional communities in the Church is their failure to establish suitable internal management structures. Significant in the success of St. Monica's parish was the fact that they had a visionary leader who was not so burdened by management issues that he lacked freedom to attend to his primary task. On the contrary, a

²³ Ibid., 146.

²⁴ Ibid.

very strong management presence was evidenced on the team. They planned and used resources to influence the vision and direction of the community.

Third, empowerment is a top priority. St. Monica's illustrated that empowering dimension over and over again. The team and parishioners felt a sense of ownership and belonging and they took pride in their community. Frequently, rounds of applause were heard as the community gathered for worship. They appreciated and recognized that they were truly the Body of Christ; each gift was affirmed and the body was strengthened in the process.

Much of the leadership literature today speaks about middle leadership, rather than middle management. Leonard L. Berry suggests that:

Leadership is not the exclusive province of senior managers. A distinguishing characteristic of excellent service companies, is the existence of "middle leaders" who bring to their responsibilities the leadership qualities that sustain success. Leadership that only comes from the top cannot sustain the core values required to perpetuate success.²⁵

When I reflect on St. Monica's, it is clear that each cluster or piece of the "mobile" was led by a team who integrated leadership and management. They were both efficient and effective.

Empowering leadership is a response to the need people have for a sense of purpose and meaning that raises them and their work above the daily grind of routine and maintenance. Inspired by this leadership, people are empowered to

²⁵ Leonard L. Berry, Discovering the Soul of Service: Mind Drivers of Sustainable Business Success, (New York: Free Press, 1999), 44.

become more active themselves, more creative in the control of their own lives through interacting with others in trust and mutuality, more confident to lead and/or support evangelizing thrusts.²⁶ Empowering leaders aim to develop those processes that encourage the responsible exercise of authority, both individually and collectively, so that people become generative of ideas and the agents of their own growth and that of the group.²⁷

This leads to a fourth aspect of leadership that builds power and authority in community, that is, *shared authority and participation*. What is basic to leadership where authority and power is shared, is an environment of dialogue, openness and respect for the voice of another. Joan Chittister points out that feminism depends on being able to listen to the one in whom we would not expect, in a patriarchal system, to find truth, wisdom, insight, and direction.²⁸ Parish leadership built on a feminist world view will be one that invites questions and fosters non-judgmental collaboration. In the movie, "Patch Adams" this sense of freedom is experienced. Patch, a hospital intern, refused to be bound by the law. Questioning procedures and taking risks in order to transform oppressive hospital structures; he freed others and brought wholeness and delight into the lives of the sick and dying. He taught people that the little ones of the world – of the parish – can gather with the great as equals. Power is not in titles and "white

²⁶ Arbuckle, 106.

²⁷ Ibid., 106.

²⁸ Chittister, 124.

coats" rather, power lies in relationships, in the ability to touch lives and make a difference.

It is important to remember that the gifts of the Spirit are given to individuals for the well-being and building up of the whole community. According to St. Paul, all the baptized are "office-bearers," and each has a charisma or power and the responsibility to exercise that gift for the service of others. (1 Cor.14). However, we know that this vision did not include women. In fact, women's presence and gift was a threat to Paul. He was especially wary, according to Antoinette Clark-Wire, of prophesying women who claimed that they had authority to do all things, that they had knowledge and may eat what they like and so on.²⁹ Fundamentally, it was women's wisdom, freedom and fluency in the church that threatened Paul's gospel and leadership.³⁰ Paul identified the privileged male as God's image and glory and the female as man's glory. (1 Cor. 11:8). In reality, the whole concept of partnership and equality were not acknowledged or affirmed by Paul. A similar struggle goes on in the Church of today, but finally more people are speaking out and advocating for the recognition and inclusion of women's leadership in Church structures.

A participative model of leadership encourages all members to discover their gifts of leadership as they involve themselves in the life of the community

²⁹ Antoinette Clark- Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric (Minn: Fortress Press, 1990), 14.

³⁰ Ibid., 15.

and in service to those on the margins. Initial outreach and service opportunities were provided at St. Monica's, but they needed further development, ownership, and action. The circle needed to be widened to connect with the stranger or the one in need. Service and authority understood in this way, springs from a vision, challenging all to be involved; it is no longer authority of clerical privilege.

Women's stories, both past and present, give us threads, images, and insights into what leadership behavior would mean in a community of shared authority. The foundational image of interlocking, overlapping circles gives shape to new paradigms. The community continues to grow and change as new circles of influence spring up to respond to needs. Each time a new circle is added, a new shape or direction is created. In this way, flexibility and fluidity mark the relationships and strength, and new growth emerges from the inter-play.

Frances Hesselbein describes the new management structure she devised for the Girl Scouts, a replacement for the old hierarchical pyramid.

I use the circles,' she says, 'because symbolically they are important.' The circle is an organic image. We speak of the family circle. The circle is inclusive, but it allows for flow and movement; the circle doesn't close you in! As the circles extend outward, there are more and more connections. So the galaxy gets more interwoven as it gets bigger.³¹

Likewise, the circle image was used to describe St. Monica's leadership structures. Talking about their roles, the leaders of each team, usually referred to

³¹ Sally Helgesen, The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership (New York: Doubleday currency, 1990), 44-45.

themselves as being at the center, reaching out and connecting with those around them. This experience of interrelatedness is essential for creating a synergy that motivates, empowers and builds solidarity.

At St. Monica's, power is located in the community, and the community calls forth and commissions men and women to assume leadership capacities which are based on their gifts rather than on roles or titles. Churches have long experienced the fallout that occurs where leaders are given responsibility based upon patriarchal models of organization in which male clergy are leaders by virtue of their role in community. While people affirm the gifts of clerics, they also know that many priests struggle to give vision, direction and leadership to a church conscious of its role in the world today. Their gifts are often more in the area of pastoral and sacramental ministry and care for the sick; yet, they are expected to function as creative, innovative leaders. Often they feel stressed and overburdened; they experience a tension between their call to pastoral leadership and expectations for direct service.

Indeed, one of the major issues confronting leadership centers around the roles and identities of clergy and laity. While the Church affirms the priesthood of all believers, people still operate out of the paradigm of leadership that is largely focused on the clergy. The clergy themselves are threatened by words like "collaboration," "empowerment," "participation," all of which signal loss of control, and maybe chaos. The past structures assumed stability, predictability, and security, and there is a fear to "let go" of the familiar and risk something new.

Yet, many are willing to try the new and the presbyterate of the Los Angeles Archdiocese is a good example of a group of clerics who took some first steps in that direction. When they met in 1997 to reflect on their ministry, the key issue that surfaced for attention and intentional proactive response was the area of parish leadership. The proceedings show that the present structures were considered inadequate to lead the parish into the future; it was determined that inclusive, collaborative models needed to be envisioned and concretized.³²

Inclusive partnership models of leadership presuppose high levels of interdependency, that is, each person in the team has his/her role clarified and feels responsible for, and is supported in, its achievement. At the same time each wants to combine his/her actions with those of others in view of a commonly accepted vision and mission.³³ A parish leadership group, if it is to become a collaborative team, must struggle to live the vision of Ephesians, which speaks of the responsibility of each member to build up the body of Christ: "We must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love" (Eph. 4:16). To achieve this goal the team will need skills for visioning, discerning, empowering, mentoring, and evaluating.

³² Nelson, Tidings, 12 and 19 Dec, 1997, 14.

³³ Arbuckle, 202.

Achieving Inclusive Partnership Leadership: Practical Dimensions and Components

As we journey toward a new century we are aware that this is an age of transformation and rebirth. This is a privileged and gifted moment when we are called to believe in the boundary breaking energy of the spirit and in our capacity, both personally and communally to experience a new Pentecost.³⁴ It is a season of change, of visioning, dreaming, developing new models of leadership. At the heart of this adventure is the need to articulate a vision that is broad, expansive and inclusive of women's and men's gifts. Habakuk instructs us to:

Write the vision:
Make it plain on tablets,
So that a runner may read it.
For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie. (Hab. 2:2-3)

People can no longer function out of old paradigms of patriarchy, control and domination. Feminist values, reflected upon and integrated have the potential to create a foundation on which liberating partnership relationships are imaged and acted upon. The leadership and the community must have vision, courage and skills to move ahead. There are steps and processes, properly developed and implemented, that will help ensure transition from hierarchical models of leadership to more inclusive ones.

³⁴ Ferder and Heagle, 78-79.

Educating for Transformation

The **first step** in creating a new model is to **engage in consciousness raising in the faith community**. The community must be helped to develop a critical consciousness around structures, mindsets and attitudes that suppress and control. Formational and educational processes are central to this endeavor, and time is of the essence. These processes cannot be rushed; the groundwork must be firmly put in place and the soil must be prepared. At its deepest level the community is challenged to conversion, to "let go" of old ways, to be open to personal and social transformation and to allow the spirit's activity to bring a freshness that will promote freedom and justice for all.

Since Feminist and Celtic values are at the core of the transformational process, a **second step** will of necessity **engage the community in a lengthy period of values education and formation**, attending both to the feeling and thinking levels of the people. Values emphasize a particular stance and value driven leaders articulate the organization's reason for being and doing. I have identified several of these **values** that are essential to the development of inclusive leadership.

One critical value is **relationship**: The essence of effective leadership is not skill and expertise but relationship. Therefore, concern needs to be placed on the quality of personal relationship to self, others, God and the whole of creation. The issue for leadership centers on the ability of people to reflect on their own journeys, and learn to respond to others out of their own human experiences of

brokenness and giftedness. Leaders and potential leaders must remember that they are one with the people, rather than over and above. Feminism assumes this inherent equality, the essential value of the other. To the feminist everything and everyone has rights and must be treated as such.³⁵

Furthermore, feminist as well as Celtic wisdom, challenge people to affirm and value their relationship with all of the earth. Joan Chittister asserts that:

Eco-feminism is the story of compassion, of responsibility and accountability for life. She contends we need to immerse ourselves in creation with new respect. We need to come to see ourselves as one more creature dependent on all others more than they are dependent on us. We need a sense of enoughness, a sense of limits, a new sense of interconnectedness with all of life that makes slaughter unthinkable and the destruction of the species impossible.³⁶

Integrating such values presupposes that the whole parish engage in a reflection process and that time is given for input, resourcing, and sharing.

Another value is **compassion** which must be experienced and lived by the community and is quite distinct from competition. The patriarchal mindset teaches that the purpose of life is to win, grab and get to the top. The feminist mindset, on the other hand, is based on care and concern for the other. It values giving, sharing, including and reaching out in compassion toward the most vulnerable and needy. This vision is gospel oriented in the likeness of Jesus, who gave away life so that others may have life in abundance. We remember Jesus with women,

³⁵ Chittister, 38.

³⁶ Ibid.

healing beggars on the side of the road, restoring sight and giving dignity to those bowed down and bent over under the burden of judgment and oppressive structures. Compassionate values beckon all to see beyond the law and rules, and at times to disobey the rules in the name of a higher, more fundamental life-restoring value. Ministry must carry the gift of compassion to the marginal, to the edge, to the poor and to the lonely. The continuing health of communities is dependent on the quality of our compassionate response to the needs of all.

Another critical value is **openness** and **flexibility**. A parish intent on developing participative, collaborative models of leadership must appreciate and learn to live with a sense of openness to surprise, to the unpredictable. Openness calls for trust in a God who never promised success and who frequently writes straight with crooked lines. It also calls for trust in one another especially in hard times. In an open, feminist environment, nothing can be off limits to discussion, to questioning, to explanation. All ideas are welcomed and discussed, regardless of their apparent worth and possibility. Instead of blocking the emergence of new ideas, new data, and new answers to old questions, and new problems, feminism includes ideas, affirms persons and enables new processes to be judged on merit rather than on fear.³⁷ Women's life experiences usually lead them to prefer personal and open communities, flexible theology, and responsible, democratic decision making.³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., 137.

³⁸ Ashe, 144.

Basic values must be chosen, prized and acted upon by the whole community, if they are to transition successfully from a hierarchical, authoritarian form of leadership to a more participative one. Indeed, feminism is a key counter-force to forms of leadership that control, dominate and suppress.

Developing a Shared Vision

Having begun a process of values education and formation, the time comes when the parish is ready to take another step – that is, to articulate a shared, clear vision which is acted upon by the whole community. This is a very critical stage since vision is the spirit and energizing principle behind the community organization, and it defines the future state which motivates a group, calling them to action. A vision asks, "Where do we want to go?" "What do we want to achieve?"³⁹ It is important to remember that vision is an in-depth understanding of where the group is headed. It moves beyond the status quo, seeks a different paradigm and focuses on future opportunity and transformation. Imaging plays a very important part in this process. It helps the community to envision what could be. Discovering the present and hoped-for image of the parish helps leaders and parishioners to uncover new ways of expressing Church.

In the interview at St. Monica's, some of the leaders talked about the operative image of the "mobile" or "tree" to describe the fluidity and inter-

³⁹ Loughlan Sofield and Donald H. Kuhn, The Collaborative Leader: Listening to the Wisdom of God's People (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1995), 56.

connectedness of the team. In a parish visioning process, a very fruitful exercise might engage the community in a process of naming the perceived image of the leadership team and the parish community. This could be evaluated; strengths and weaknesses might be articulated, and the parish encouraged to brainstorm a hoped-for image – an image that will identify the hopes of the community and its vision toward the future.

According to Loughlin Sofield, there are four dimensions to a vision: it must be **shared, clear, realistic and dynamic**.⁴⁰ These four aspects of vision are critical to success. Ongoing education and formation around core feminist and Celtic values, readies the community to carve such a preferred future for leadership and ministry in the parish. The first dimension of this dream is shared vision, which can be enhanced in practical ways. Through a process of dialogue and discussions the faith community is enabled to develop a vision and direction. This can be a slow, painful experience but it affirms that each person has a piece of the truth, and together they are empowered by the Spirit to articulate a common vision that can be claimed and enacted by the group. The process may entail several *town meetings* or small communities of faith sharing, some planning sessions, and ongoing communication through E-mail, parish bulletins, newsletters, etc.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 56-57.

The vision must also be clear and concise; otherwise there will be confusion and conflict. Too often vision statements are long and wordy, and frequently written in the privacy of someone's office. A good example of a clear, concise vision statement appears on police cars in Hollywood ; it reads "To protect and to serve." That statement sums up the commitment of the police force to provide a safe environment and to instill confidence.

Leaders don't always have the vision within themselves; they learn from others. Martin Luther King found many of his ideas in the study of religions and ethical ideologies as well as in the traditions and symbols of his own and other peoples. Lenin was greatly influenced by the scholarship of Karl Marx, in the same manner as the works of leading economists and management scholars influences many contemporary business leaders.⁴¹ Likewise, parish leadership can be mentored and be a mentor to others. Models that work can be studied, and insights gained can useful in forming future plans and implementation processes.

A realistic vision energizes and motivates the community and encourages commitment to live in the chosen direction. Without this realism there is only frustration. People feel overwhelmed with unattainable aspirations, and in the end they shrink away and the vision flounders or dies. When John F. Kennedy set a goal of putting a man on the moon by 1970 and Bill Gates aimed to put a computer on every desk and in every home, they were focusing attention on

⁴¹ Bennis and Nanus, 34.

worthwhile and attainable achievements. They had a focused, exciting target that mobilized energy.

A **dynamic** vision, in its affective dimension, touches the heart and moves people to action. It is open-minded in the sense that it is ever ready to receive new information. Its tentacles are attuned to the signs of the times, and it is flexible to adjust the sails when necessary. On a practical level, it means that to remain vital and alive the vision must be examined, redefined and re-directed in response to needs and to emerging needs.

Building Participation and Commitment

In addition to developing a shared vision, a very critical step in the process of developing a transformative model of leadership is building participation and commitment. The strength and endurance of the articulated vision and direction will depend upon the involvement, participation and ownership experienced by leaders in the team and parish community. Gaining this ownership can be a messy and overwhelming task. It entails establishing webs of communication and involvement, as well as soliciting information, feedback and commitment from the local community and leadership team. The concept of "spiritlinking" coined by Donna Markham and her Dominican Community can help create bonds of connection and inter-relationship. Donna asserts that:

Spiritlinking is about not being afraid of chaos. It is about believing that chaos is simply a more complex form of an incredibly mysterious order that we are just

not able to see yet – an exquisite order that lies just beyond our vision and will emerge unexpectedly and suddenly, when the time is right and we have developed the insight to see it. Leaders who know this are continually engaged in networking, heightening communication, and inviting diverse people from across our organizations to come together to raise the questions that will keep our institutions focused on our mission and protect us from settling into the stultifying comfort of routine. Leaders who understand spiritlinking believe that each person in the system is a conduit of organizational energy – an expression of spirit, values, culture, and ethics of the whole.⁴²

This sense of spiritlinking is evidenced at St. Monica's Parish. From time to time the pastoral team gathers the community in clusters to listen, to solicit ideas, to share information and to celebrate successes. The parishioners talk with pride about the parish identity and vision and they frequently use the word "we" when referring to the community. Experiencing themselves as a part of the whole, they know that their ideas are respected and affirmed, and this gives them value and dignity. Ongoing accountability around finances is evidenced in the parish administrator's annual oral and written report to the whole assembly. The report keeps the community informed and involved in the projects and plans sponsored and implemented by the leadership team.

Participative styles of leadership link and unify the gifts present in the community. The process of stretching the circles of influence and creating new ones is ongoing and demanding. It requires an openness to learn from others'

⁴² Donna Markham, "Spiritlinking Leadership," Human Development no.3 (1994):6.

ideas and perspectives, and a conviction that the whole is strengthened by the parts working in unison. The pastor of St. Monica's likened the working relationship of the team to a "chorus of many voices creating a melodious harmony that is bigger than any one part."

Building commitment around the vision and mission of the community requires persistence. Theodore Friend III, the past president of Swathmore College, defines leadership as: "heading into the wind with such knowledge of oneself and such collaborative energy as to move others to wish to follow. The angle into the wind is less important than choosing one and sticking reasonably to it."⁴³ This ceaseless persistence is at the core of feminist modes of operating. In the face of ridicule and opposition, women such as Rosemary Ruether, Elizabeth Johnson, Elizabeth Fiorenza have modeled steadfastness, courage and conviction which in turn engage trust.

Trust is central to inspiring confidence and affirming a vision. Bennis and Nanus contend that trust is the emotional glue that meshes followers and leaders together. It cannot be bought or mandated; it must be earned.⁴⁴ St. Monica's faith community exhibited high trust. Their stories were filled with very positive experiences of the initiatives taken and commitment of the team to quality, wholehearted service. They knew that the leadership team respected them, involved them and communicated effectively. Indeed communication is essential

⁴³ Bennis and Nanus, 42.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 142.

to rallying supporters especially as a parish moves into new paradigms of leadership and involvement. Bennis and Nanus remind us that "a half century ago, Roosevelt and Churchill were the great communicators, and in more recent times, Nelson Mandela, Margaret Thatcher and Yitzhak Rabin were among the leaders who reshaped their societies through their extraordinary persuasive abilities."⁴⁵

To gain support and ownership of new leadership models, parish leadership must move to establish networks for ongoing communication and facilitation of information flow. Success requires the ability to relate a compelling vision, the kind that stirs up enthusiasm, trust and commitment in others.

Enhancing Decision Making and Discernment

Participative, collaborative styles of leadership call for respectful decision making processes. Drawing upon insights from Donna Markham's work. Engaging in a process of synergistic decision making, which in turn encourages a spiritlinking mentality by leadership teams, appears to be especially effective. In the recent past, leaders have sought input from a variety of sources; they have engaged in consensus decision making and more people have assumed responsibility for the outcomes. In contrast, for the sake of consensus, decisions have sometimes been embraced with no one really feeling passionate about them

⁴⁵ Ibid., 34.

— and without passion, excitement, and energy, there is not commitment. Donna Markham states that we must move beyond consensus to spiritlinking, which happens in the midst of synergy. She proposes:

Leaders who unabashedly gather strong-minded, self-assured individuals who perhaps hold vastly differing perspectives will create an organization capable of making and implementing decisions. We must re-envision our stereotypical perception of conflict — that is to be resolved, avoided, that it says something is terribly wrong — if we are to move toward the discontinuity and unpredictability that synergistic decision making will generate. The challenge for leaders is to become comfortable with the confusion of synergy and the creativity of conflicting views. Spiritlinking happens in the midst of synergistic, conflict-generating, risk-taking, thinking and discussion.⁴⁶

This type of decision making calls forth the creative energy of many; it moves people forward to take the risks and create new forms of leadership. It was operative in St. Monica's approach and it supported high levels of commitment and enthusiasm. Robert D. Duch notes, "The design of any institution's structure should include levels of decision making that are consistent with each person's realm of responsibility. When people know what their responsibilities are, and when they know what power and authority they possess for decision making, frustration and embarrassment can be avoided."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Donna Markham, "Spiritlinking Leadership," 8.

⁴⁷ Duch, 27.

Pastoral discernment processes, drawn from The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius can be helpful in synergistic decision making. For Ignatius and for us, the central question is: "What is God asking of individuals or of the group? What does love demand?"⁴⁸ To hear God speak, teams must spend time in prayerful listening and reflect on the pros and cons of a given proposal or direction. That means listening not only to the words, but to the melody, to the verbal as well as to the non-verbal. Wholistic processes such as these call people to honor their bodies, to listen to the pains and aches, joys and sorrows, because God is present in the dark as well as in the light. All are challenged to enter into their experiences and discover the obstacles and resistances to true listening to the Spirit: the fear, the anxiety and sinfulness that are present. As persons are gradually freed from these interior barriers, they are able to evaluate and interpret the alternatives, and gradually they come to peace with a direction. It is out of this prayerful honest reflection that together the group enters into a spirit-linking mentality where new directions are carved out, decided and acted upon.

To concretize the process of synergistic decision-making, specific steps must be taken to achieve the desired outcome.

Step 1: Establish clear parameters about who makes specific decisions in certain clusters or areas of ministry.

Step 2: Include all people who are directly affected by the decision.

⁴⁸ Fleming,, 107, no. 74.

Step 3: Establish a time line.

Step 4: Ensure that all understand spiritlinking – synergetic decision making processes.

Step 5: Create communication procedures for gathering information and informing the community of the decision(s) made.

Step 6: Establish processes for implementing the decision.

These steps appropriately implemented and will help ensure ownership, participation and commitment to move forward with one voice and one vision.

Mission and Ministry

The mission of the parish flows from the shared vision of the community and is reinforced by gospel values and imperatives. I suggest that the agenda of the parish mission and ministries ought to be the agenda of Jesus, which finds its roots in Is. (61:1-2) and Lev. (25:17-25). Jesus took up the scroll and read these words: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, and has anointed me – to give sight to the blind, freedom to captives and proclaim a year of Jubilee" (Luke 4:16-20). This same theme is taken up and expanded upon by Pope Paul II in his Jubilee Document: Tertio Millennio Adveniente: On the coming of the Third Millennium, and it is further developed in the revised General Directory for Catechesis, published in 1998. It is fitting as we bid farewell to the 20th Century, that we take the prescriptions and focus of these documents to heart and allow them inform

mission and ministries. The emerging themes challenge all to re-think ministries in light of basic gospel truths. In particular, people are called to:

Holiness/spirituality
Sabbath rest
Liberation, justice and solidarity
Unity in the midst of diversity

Holiness and Spirituality

In the document, "Tertio Millennio Adveniente, " John Paul II stresses that the primary objective of the Jubilee is the need to:

. . .instill in the faithful a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal in the context of ever more intense prayer and of solidarity with one's neighbor especially the most needy.⁴⁹

The call to holiness has to be at the heart of parish leadership of the future, infusing all relationships, processes and modes of operating with a spirit of openness, and longing for growth, and renewal. Parish communities are invited to grow in love of God and neighbor; and be significant sources of energizing love and healing compassion for transforming the world into a more loving and caring society. Pastorally, this challenges parish leadership to develop strategies for deepening the spiritual life of the community.

One of the great phenomenas of the 1900s century is the hunger for spirituality among the faithful. We know that the Catholic Church has a rich spiritual tradition. In particular the spirituality of the Desert Fathers and

⁴⁹ John Paul II, "Tertio Millennio Adveniente," Origins 24, (Nov. 1994): 412.

Mothers, of Thomas a Kempis, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila. Their writings are spiritual classics and have nourished and inspired men and women through the ages and will continue to do so. Yet, a feminist world-view is lacking in most of these works – a worldview connecting body, nature, society. Celtic and feminist spirituality makes available what is lacking. Reinforcing wholistic, integrated approaches to living, they ground partnership, and challenge the community to new depths of understanding. The Celts saw the secular as saturated with the sacred, and they experienced God in all of life; thus they avoided the dualism that has plagued the world for many centuries. Feminist spirituality follows the vision and agenda of Jesus who sought out the outcast, tax collectors, women and children, pharisees and paralytics presumed to be in sin and raised them all to the height of his own soul.⁵⁰

Sabbatical Rest

The prescriptions of Leviticus remind people to let the land lie fallow. The text reads, "For six years you may sow your field and for six years prune your vineyard, gathering in its produce. But during the seventh year the land shall have a complete rest, a Sabbath for the land" Lev. (25: 17-25). Cessation from activity, and taking time to recreate, challenges a fast paced, frenzied environment that frequently loses itself in activity and fails to honor the gift of leisure. Parish

⁵⁰ Chittister, 39.

leadership of the future would do well to embody leisure and model counter-cultural ways of being and doing. Joseph Pieper defines leisure as "the capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation." It is a contemplative attitude and "it is in silent and receptive moments," says Pieper, "that the soul of man and woman is sometimes visited by an awareness of what holds the world together."⁵¹ The Celtic Church taught us much about leisure and Sabbatical rest. William Davies in one of his poems, "Leisure," reminds us to stand and stare and be present to the depth of life and of beauty. He writes,

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.⁵²

The counter-cultural stance must cut through all parish ministries and speak a word of renewal and transformation. Parish leadership is that heaven nudging and beckoning the community to open out to life-giving, refreshing forces in which they might experience themselves as saturated by the Holy.

Liberation, Justice and Solidarity

Ministry can be described as an attentive working within God's working to bring human life to fullness. The minister is one who facilitates the growth and development of the community. He/she helps the individual members to become the best, life-giving human beings that they are capable of. Practically, it means

⁵¹ Josef Pieper, Leisure: The Basic of Culture (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952), 52.

⁵² Included in The New Oxford Book of English Verse, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 836.

they must develop processes that help the community to reflect on life-experiences and name those demons which de-energize, oppress and dampen spirits.

Feminists have long emphasized the power of naming as an act of liberation – naming fears, idolatries, conflicts and opinions.⁵³ Parish leadership of the future must participate in this process of naming and be sensitive to the power of language to inform, shape, and identify reality. Therefore, as parishes define their mission and ministry, they must ask whether their language – their modes of communication – reinforces injustices or provides insight and images for liberation. Feminism helps shape leadership's response to need and to the poor, disenfranchised, and marginalized. Feminists understand power as service. Letty Russell points out that "service does not imply pacifying others by acting for them but, rather, working with them to create shared power and shared resources so that all are empowered to shape their own destinies and all can be in mutual service".⁵⁴ Parish leaders who operate out of this mindset are themselves open to being shaped by the very people whom they serve. It is a service of reciprocity and co-creation.

Unity in the Midst of Diversity

The Church today is confronted by many different questions, varying theologies and at times disagreements over matters which, though important in

⁵³ Rhodes, 75.

⁵⁴ Letty M. Russell, Growth in Partnership (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 55.

themselves, are not matters of core belief. There are pressures from the left and pressures from the right, some calling to slow down others to speed up.

Leadership itself is often confronted and pressured to advise ministries regarding how they can be developed and implemented, all stemming from the need to keep the status quo. Parish leadership faced with these tensions and polarizations, must seek responses that encourage unity in diversity. Drawing upon the wisdom and image of Church Lathrop's poem, "Roundtabling" might be helpful in this enterprise. He writes:

Roundtabling means
being with, a part of, together, and one.⁵⁵

What does roundtabling mean for parish leaders who gather, who tell the story, and who send? It means many things. First, it means **recognizing diversity**. In an article entitled, "Divisions, Dialogue and the Catholicity of the Church," Fr. Thomas Rausch, stresses that Catholicism includes within itself a wide variety of theologies, spirituality, and experiences of Christian life. We must understand that truth is bigger than any one group or viewpoint. Indeed, solutions to our challenges and problems (parish, diocesan and worldwide) will emerge from a variety of sources. This does not mean that all will agree, or that all will have the

⁵⁵ Chuck Lathrop, "In Search of a Roundtable," in A Gentle Presence (Washington, D.C., Appalachian Documentation, 1977), 5-8.

same gifts but rather that the different gifts of a spirit contribute to partnership in ministry.⁵⁶

Second, it means **working for inclusivity**. Parish leadership must have a life-centered view of the world and see every creature as being linked to one another and to God.

They must widen their circles of compassion, and help all to experience solidarity with their brothers and sisters and the whole human family, regardless of race, nationality or economic condition. Overcoming the divisions of race and counteracting the widening gap between those who are well off and those who are poor is more than a political strategy; it is integral to an understanding of the body of Christ and central to sharing in the mission of Jesus.

Third, the roundtable image reminds us that **the Church that gathers at the Eucharistic table as an expression of its commitment to Christ is also called to welcome and to accept all those whom Christ has welcomed and accepted**. St. Paul speaks of partnership with one another and in Christ through sharing the cup and bread.(1 Cor.10:11-21). The table is always one that is spread as a gift of God and hosted by Christ. It is a table with many connections; the principal connection for all gathered around is the connection with Christ. Out of this center comes our connection with all humankind and our responsibility to be agents of unity.

⁵⁶ Thomas Rausch, "Divisions, Dialogue and the Catholicity of the Church," America, Jan-Feb., 1998, 20-29.

Evaluating and Planning in Light of Emerging needs

Evaluation and adjustment in light of new needs are essential for the ongoing growth and development of parish teams and parish ministries. A process of reflection and evaluation assures that this phase is not omitted or short-circuited. A community which gathers to take a hard look at what they are attempting to "be" and "do" is a community intent on quality performance; an intensity holds them accountable to envision, initiate and implement programs and actions that respond to the needs of the community. This necessarily presupposes that the team and community value reflection and awareness raising. Without constant reflection on experience, no depth and no commitment will be achieved. The movement of evaluating and planning actually circles back to the earlier movement of educating for transformation. The circle begins again.

The first step in this process is **experience - reflection**. Insights from feminist theology lead people to honor personal and communal experience. Out of the shared experience, wisdom is surfaced and new insights are gained. For this purpose it is essential that structured times are set aside for this communal reflection upon experience. For example, a parish might hold regularly scheduled "review sessions," in which parishioners could voice opinions, observations and give feedback. Areas for evaluation can include liturgy, homilies, educational and pastoral ministries, outreach and spiritual development. In this way the parish would expand feedback options in order to discover what people really want.

Having listened to this shared wisdom, the team may have to grapple with some **choices** that will challenge them. Synergistic decision making will lead them to choose priorities that are life-giving and inclusive. They will have to sift out what to let go and what to embrace; then muster the courage to make hard choices when necessary. This can be a slow process but it is worth the time and energy; community building is a by-product of such reflection and sharing.

A final step in the process is **commitment to action**. Having identified and prioritized concrete choices, the team must assume responsibility for implementing the plan. Questions such as, "What will be done?" "Who will be responsible?" "When will it be done?" are crucial for follow-through. Without this concretization and accountability, plans will fall apart. Ongoing evaluation and adjustment in light of needs is integral to the whole process. The cycle provides a forum for clarification, for keeping relationships and collaborative processes on target, and for eliciting engagement from the team and community.

Conclusions

Inclusive, participative Church leadership models blend several strands of influence. These have been articulated in this chapter as foundational principles and values; they have also guided the practical proposals offered here. Among these influences are:

- **Women's ways and styles of leadership:** Women's influence is experienced in areas such as community building, power, ministry,

decision- making, structure development and worship. By their very being they call old ways of thinking into question and in the process minister to unjust structures.

- **Ecclesiology:** An ecclesiology based on "communio" is key to the development of collaborative styles of leadership. Just as the Celtic monastic experience shared a horizontal equality in much of their lives, so it is conceivable that parish staffs of the future may take the best of the monastic life style and develop some communal aspect to their shared experience.
- **Processes:** A community can take steps, as part of carefully developed processes, that enable transition from hierarchical models of leadership to more inclusive ones. Among these are: 1) Consciousness raising in the community around structures, mindsets and attitudes; 2) Integration of values such as personhood, compassion and relationship to self, others, God and the whole of creation.
- **Vision:** A clear, realistic and dynamic vision for the future is critical. This celebrated, and acted upon by the whole community.
- **Mission:** Gospel values and imperatives give direction to the mission of the community. Of particular importance is the proclamation of Jesus "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me and has anointed me to give sight to the blind, freedom to captives and proclaim a year of favor" (Luke 4:16-20). Four areas of great significance are: 1) Holiness and spirituality,

2) Sabbatical rest, 3) Liberation, Justice and Solidarity, 4) Unity in the midst of diversity.

- **Evaluation:** Evaluation based on experience and adjustment in the light of new needs is essential for the on-going growth and development of parish teams.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSITION, SPIRITUALITY AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Every transition begins with an ending. We have to "let go" of the familiar before we can embrace the new. This "letting go" is often painful and frightening as we discover that some part of us is holding onto security; and we are afraid to risk the unknown. The pain and anxiety experienced in assuming a new leadership position can be very real. When the writer entered a new position in the Ministry of Religious Education, there was excitement about the challenges and opportunities made available; there was also a sense of grief and mourning the loss of identity. This was expressed in a reluctance to read congratulatory notes and good wishes. I found myself in denial and tried to insulate myself from admitting the reality I was about to enter. My resistance to change showed up in my hesitation to remove my previous ministry title and replace it with the new.

Insights from William Bridge's book Transitions can help make sense of the uprootedness felt by those experiencing change, and the book offers strategies for coping. Bridges points out that there are three phases in the transition process. First there is an "ending" followed by a neutral zone or "in between stage" and finally a "new beginning" signals a fresh start.¹ This chapter addresses the

¹ William Bridges, Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1980), 89-133.

transition process, offers suggestions for coping with change and outlines strategies for facilitating the transition to new paradigms of leadership in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Although an enormous task, it is clear that transformational leadership is foundational to the whole process.

Transitional Processes

As parishes transition to new *paradigms* and new models of leadership it is crucial that leadership understand and validate the transition process. Endings involve a symbolic death, often accompanied with the pain of loss, anger and confusion. It can be a very turbulent time for a parish leadership team and community. Indeed, communities react to endings the same way that Elizabeth Kubler Ross found terminally ill patients reacting to their impending death. They go through a five stage sequence that moves from denial to anger to bargaining to depression and finally to acceptance.²

Skills for coping with these difficult and confusing times and gaining an understanding of endings and rituals of "letting go," can be helpful in the transition process. One ritual that helps to enable participants in getting in touch with their experiences on the personal and interpersonal levels begins at the center of an imaginary circle. The ritual moves in several steps. Participants step forward and backward, to the left and to the right. In each sequential movement they reflect

² Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, On Death and Dying (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 38-137.

and identify any fear, anger, and disillusionment experienced in relationships at home, at work, etc. In a gesture of surrender, they are invited to "gather the experiences together, lift them up, bless them as holy and let them go." This lifting up, blessing and letting go of the feelings is a very powerful source of releasement. Participants frequently report that this ritual brings them to a place of freedom and peace even in the midst of the pain, and they often gain power over the emotions that can potentially trap them.

Celtic spirituality affirms this wholistic ritual experience. The Celts were a people who had a keen sense of the circular nature of the journey. They came out of the bleakness of winter into the possibility and effervescence of springtime. Conscious of God's presence and power in all of life and the need to be connected to the source of energy, they blessed the darkness and sent it on its way so that the light could dawn. The ritual can be likened to the process of disengagement and dis-identification that William Bridges speaks about and one that is very crucial for new growth to take hold.³

The ending phase is followed by the neutral zone or "in between" stage. For many, the neutral zone is essentially one of emptiness in which the old reality looks transparent and nothing seems solid or secure any more. Uprootedness is accompanied by a sense of lostness; the old identity and self-image has broken down and given way to a feeling of insecurity. It is imperative for the parish

³ Bridges, 92-97.

community and team to confront the emptiness. The following suggestions are helpful in that process.

1. **Schedule time for team to reflect and share their feelings and reactions.**
2. **Face the darkness. Name what is experienced and stop struggling to escape it.**
3. **Engage in rituals and especially rites of passage to make way for the new.**

Witnessing one such ritual for a friend Annette who celebrated her 50th birthday illustrates this. For this special milestone in her life, and to mark it, Annette invited special friends to share the sacred moment. We gathered round a bridge located in a beautiful, peaceful garden. After spending time in song, praise and storytelling, Annette was invited to climb onto the bridge and cross over to the other side. Walking across the threshold was a powerful experience for her and for all present. It symbolized and concretized the experience of transition into the Jubilee years and gave words to express the feelings—the hopes and the joys.

Experiencing similar and other communal rituals can be great sources of freedom for parishes dealing with transition. The rituals allow the community to mourn, to celebrate and to embrace a new identity.

4. Journaling as a way to deal with the "chaos" and ambivalent emotions.

In the process of journaling persons get in touch with their inner resources; they name and claim their feelings and gain clarity and objectivity. Ultimately, they experience freedom to risk new beginnings. Bridges notes that "the familiar process involves an inner realignment and a renewal of energy, both of which depend on immersion in the chaos of the neutral zone. It is as though the frame we call 'my life' had to return occasionally to pure energy in order to take a new shape and gain new momentum."⁴

New beginnings are often accompanied with feelings of excitement and anticipation as well as anxiety and ambivalence. The individual and the team know that they cannot remain in the neutral zone; they must risk the unfamiliar. The words of Jessica Powers' poem, "South Wind" signals an invitation to plunge into the new. She writes:

Hurry me into springtime: hustle the winter out of my sight;
Then plunge me into my leafing and my blossoming.⁵

The new beginning is really a re-birth, an embracing of a new identity and an engagement that calls the team to thrust their roots into the new soil and allow the growth process to begin. At this juncture the team must resist returning and

⁴ Ibid., 136.

⁵ Jessica Powers, "Come, South Wind," in Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers, eds. Robert F. Morneau and Regina Siegfried, 6th. ed. (Kansas City, Mo: Sheed and Ward, 1989), 37.

longing for "the flesh pots of Egypt" and continue the journey with faith and hope.

The words of Jeremiah can be a source of encouragement:

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
 whose trust is the Lord.
 They shall be like a planted tree by water,
 Sending out its roots by the stream.
 It shall not fear when the heat comes,
 And its leaves shall stay green;
 in the year of drought it is not anxious,
 and it does not cease to bear fruit. (Jer.17:7-8).

Strategies for Developing a New Paradigm of Leadership In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles

The transition to new paradigms and models of leadership is a courageous endeavor requiring well thought out implementation steps within the Diocesan parish structures. Several strategic priorities are foundational to the development of creative, innovative styles of leadership.

The first of these priorities is rooted in the recognition that participative leadership is not just something that happens. It must be clearly articulated so that everyone understands the vision; it must be carefully prepared for, so that all, especially the leadership have the skills and expertise to function in such a model; and finally, it must be nurtured and implemented patiently and sensitively.⁶ To this end there are steps and processes that will help in the implementation and securing of ownership of new models of leadership.

⁶ Howard J. Hubbard, Fulfilling the Vision (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1998), 43.

The transition in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is a very exciting and challenging venture. It is heartening that the seeds of a transition were sown in a gathering of the Presbyterate in 1997, when the assembly took as their mandate "the development of lay leadership formation and collaborative styles of ministry."⁷ The mandate signals change, redirection and decision to move forward together rather than in parallel tracks. But the question still remains, "How will this vision be concretized to create innovative parish leadership structures?"

First it begs for *communication* and *dialogue* across the parish, deanery, regional and Archdiocesan entities. Significantly the vision for a new paradigm surfaced in the community of assembled priests, bishops, and the Cardinal; it was not imposed from the top. Sharing the vision with the whole Archdiocese is best accomplished at the deanery level.

However, the deanery structure needs to be broadened to include not only gatherings of clergy, but also lay leadership from the parish and Archdiocesan Catholic Center. Deanery gatherings can be powerful vehicles for awareness raising, communication, dialogue, clarification and commitment. Bishop Hubbard wisely suggests:

All of us within the Church - bishops, priests, deacons, religious and laity - need to be in a conversation or dialogue with one another about the vision. This cannot be stressed strongly enough because so often the disagreements or obstacles that arise in pastoral planning and parish restructuring stem from the fact

⁷ Nelson, Tidings, 12 and 19 Dec. 1997, 14.

that people are operating with different ecclesiologies or different models of the Church and do not share the same view. We can't live and act, therefore, with the quiet assumption that we are all at the same place. We need to talk things out, theologically and ecclesiologically.⁸

The conversation over time will help build community spirit and break down barriers caused by fear, suspicion and stereotyping. Without bonds of interrelatedness and trust it will be almost impossible for a group to embrace collaborative, participative modes of operating. These initial gatherings need to be non-threatening, with ample time afforded for sharing opinions, hopes and fears. Recently, while participating in one such gathering the writer was reminded of the importance of honest communication and openness to new ideas. Good listening clears the static and prepares the way for new growth.

Educational Opportunities

Educational-formational opportunities follow the initial community-sharing stage. If parish planning and re-structuring are to flourish, a comprehensive network of educational programs are vital. While numerous effective educational programs are offered, sponsored by the Archdiocesan Central Offices, Colleges and Universities in the area, a collaborative, integrated approach is lacking, and duplication is frequently experienced. These offices and institutions are challenged to evaluate and create new approaches to providing and delivering educational-

⁸ Hubbard, 17-18.

formational services. The courage to "let go" and image fresh, new ways of being Church is both fearful and exciting.

Implementing collaborative educational efforts calls for the establishment of Leadership Schools of Ministry in the five Pastoral Regions of the Archdiocese. Envisioned and given direction through a representative team drawn from the deanery, regional, archdiocesan and college levels, each school of ministry would shape its programs in response to the needs of its particular region, but the focus would always be on leadership training and formation. Structural connections would be made with the Regional, Archdiocesan and College entities to ensure overall coordination, support and ongoing evaluation.

Seminary training becomes very crucial in this whole equation. Seminarians must be given the theological background and skills that will equip them to assume collaborative styles of leadership. They must understand that their priestly ministry is one of service and "power with" rather than "power" over or privilege. This will necessitate education for the seminarians, but also for parish communities who have been accustomed to thinking in "ladders" rather than in "circles." Team building takes time, commitment, ability to affirm difference, and the capability to manage conflict. At the Seminary level it becomes very important to develop new ways of operating that will open up the seminary to welcoming lay ministers on campus. The coming together of ministries will pave the way for building bridges, affirming gifts, creating equality and moving forward together. In addition to initial formational opportunities, Bishop Hubbard notes:

If the pastoral planning process and its eventual implementation are to be a success, then all the ministers within the Church must be continually open to ongoing education and formation, making time for reading, listening to tapes, and attending workshops and lectures that will give the knowledge and skills, needed to keep abreast of what's happening in scripture, theology, liturgy and contemporary pastoral practice.⁹

In particular, people will need to pay attention to the wisdom available in Celtic and feminist spirituality – a wisdom that calls for inclusivity and partnership.

While recognizing that the Catholic Church has hierarchical and charismatic elements, both must be honored and balanced. In the past the hierarchical was emphasized to the near exclusion of the charismatic; now through the power of God-Sophia at work in all of creation, people are invited to affirm the gifts of the whole body and call them into a communion of partnership and responsibility. Still, tension arises from these two very important theological principles that coexist in the Vatican II Church, especially in areas such as authority and decision making. One side stresses unity in Christ and the other side emphasizes the need for structure, organization and authority. Bishop Hubbard says:

Somewhere between them we are expected to govern and be governed, to minister and to be ministered to. The challenge, then, is to recognize the authority of these who held pastoral office within the Church without diminishing the value of these who recognize their call to shared leadership responsibility arising from Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., 46.

¹⁰ Ibid., 81.

A well thought-out collaborative response to ministry recognizes the role and place of legitimate authority and at the same time welcomes the input and wisdom of all the faithful. This participative style creates a synergy that is bigger than any of its parts and yet does not diminish the place of authority in community.

Furthermore, drawing upon the insights of feminist and Celtic spirituality, laity must be helped to appreciate interconnectedness, to understand their responsibility to help transform society, and to make the message of the Gospel real in their families, places of work, and political worlds. This call needs more reflection and the conviction that everyday life and work is ministry. In the past laity were encouraged to leave the world in order to find God and holiness; now they are counseled to find God in all of life and to believe in the words of Walt Whitman that "every hour of light and darkness is a miracle, every inch of space is a miracle."¹¹ The task is to help people discover God's presence of the center of the universe.

Financial Resources

A very practical and necessary consideration for new models of leadership is finances for education and just salaries. In the past, excellent educational opportunities were made available to clergy and religious; these were

¹¹ Walt Whitman, "Power of Perfect Miracles" in Selected Poems, 1855-1892, ed., Gary Schmidgall (New York: St. Martin's Press. 1999), 155.

funded through community and Archdiocesan resources. Today the laity need quality education and formation guidance to equip them for parish and diocesan leadership roles. They too, are in need of the finances to enable them to receive certification and degrees in theology, pastoral ministry, religious studies, and so on. For this purpose, the Archdiocese must look ahead and establish endowments to subsidize and make educational funds available.

Likewise, it is important that attention be given to the question of just salaries for lay ministers; salary scales in keeping with economic justice and right relationships must be established. Stewardship and responsibility undergirds this vision. Parish communities need education and awareness raising in this area. A responsibility rests on all to contribute a portion of their finances for the up building of the body; and an understanding that gifts freely received, must in turn be freely given away. At the heart of the process is the affirmation that "All is Gift." People are mere stewards and have responsibility toward the sister, the brother and toward all of creation. Feminist and Celtic spirituality keeps that vision alive; it reminds all that stewardship is a way of life and a practical response and commitment to work together to be at the service of the Reign of God here on earth.

Visionary, life-giving, and participative parishes have this sense of stewardship and they are generous in their giving. I am reminded here of St. Monica's where there is an outpouring and response not only to specific "courses"

and "needs" but an ongoing sense of responsibility to share time, talent and gift.

Hubbard says:

Stewardship, is not about money; it is about faith.
Money is involved but only as an expression of faith,
only as a way to translate one's relationship with the
Lord, nurtured by prayers and the sacraments of the
Church, into concrete action.¹²

If a parish has good vision, good ministries and vibrant liturgies, the faithful will be motivated to support and give part of their resources. These resources in turn can finance education and provide just salaries for lay ministers.

Looking outward and allowing circles of inclusion to expand are other challenges for Dioceses in the process of developing collaborative models of leadership. Parishes must connect, form clusters and facilitate interchange, so that the gifts of the wealthy, the poor, the old, the young, and the many cultures as well as the genders can be woven to strengthen and empower.

Finally, we are brought back to where we began, to recognize the spirit of God-Sophia at the heart of the universe, a spirit that nudges us to say:

Inside of us
There is a wonderful
Spirit of freedom.¹³

Relying on this spirit, parish and Diocesan leadership can garner the wisdom, risk the unpredictable, and forge ahead to carve out a desired future for parish leadership.

¹² Hubbard, 88.

¹³ Rupp, 61.

Transformational Leadership

At the heart of any new model of leadership lies energy, a spirit; men and women who are committed to transformation. Without this energy and clarity of purpose, parishes can go through years of strategic planning and visioning and still not experience real transformation. Therefore, transformative leaders are key to the whole process of building inclusive, participative parish communities. This section will examine transformational styles of leadership and further suggest that a spirituality for sustaining energy, focus and commitment is at the heart of leadership development.

Parishes intent on change might choose as their driving force a motto, such as, "participative leadership impels us." The motto keeps the vision alive and vital, but at the same time begs for transformational leadership to embody and articulate core values. What is this transformational leadership, and how does it infuse spirit and life into a community?

The gospels give us wonderful word pictures, imaging Jesus' transformative style of leadership. The stories portray a leader who interacted with people, who was charismatic, creative, and concerned with the individual as much as with the group. Michael Carey points out that "the symbol of leaven used in Jesus' parables typifies his leadership, which does not end in one leader/follower interaction but continues to spread, building a community of Christ-like leaders, a

kingdom of God."¹⁴ Drawing upon the insights of political theorist James MacGregor Burns, Michael Carey further defines transformational leadership. He writes, "At its most elementary stage, transforming leadership describes an interaction in which leader and followers engage each other to share individual perceptions and values in order to work out a common sense of the good."¹⁵

Leadership has much to learn from Jesus' journey. His presence, gaze and words had power to change hearts, to open eyes and to mediate healing. Furthermore, his life, death and resurrection unfolded a vision of a "new heaven, a new earth" and called followers to be at the service of this dream. He was aware of the frailty of humankind and experienced disappointing responses from some of his closest friends. There was Peter who denied and Judas who betrayed; yet Jesus held on and in the end his unconditional love and friendship were victorious.

Jesus' prophetic stance reversed modes of operating and interacted with the religious, social, and political powers of his time. He proclaimed that the law was at the service of the people, not the people at the service of the law. Confronting the haughty with a lack of integrity, he liberated those who were judged and adapted his message to the "signs of the times."

The disciples on the road to Emmaus experienced his powerful transformational presence. He walked into their lives as they mused about the

¹⁴ Michael R. Carey, "Transformative Christian Leadership," Human Development, Spring 1991, 30.

¹⁵ Ibid., 31.

strange things that had happened in Jerusalem. His humor teased and his questions prodded. "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" (Luke 24:17). As the dialogue continued, he explained the words of Scripture to them, and in the meal experience a profound revelation took place and they recognized him in the breaking of the bread. Jesus' presence transformed unbelieving hearts, and they immediately went forth to tell the story. In the context of a meal, eyes were opened, hearts were set on fire, and lives were readied to be broken open and shared.

The strategy of Jesus who transformed followers into leaders must be adopted and integrated by leaders who are intent on developing inclusive, participative leadership teams and parish communities. Jesus commissioned his followers "As God has sent me, so I send you" (John 20: 21) to be bringers of peace, to foster right relationships, and to empower.

Transformational leaders are visionaries, connected to the past but with wisdom and imagination to explore new frontiers. Spirit-filled, they believe in the creative power of the Spirit to lead into uncharted territory and create new paths in the wilderness. In a conversation with one leader, I asked what motivated and sustained her to forge ahead and take new directions. She answered, "I go deep into the well of my being and there I experience a power greater than myself that challenges me to be a risk taker. She added:

I have taken the words of Paul in Ephesians to be my theme song. *Glory be to God whose power working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.*

(Eph.3:20-21), (NJB). The resonance of these words grounds me, frees me to 'let go' and trust a God who is bigger than I imagine God to be".¹⁶

Possessing a wholistic view of life, transformational leaders affirm the interconnectedness of relationships and develop effective exchanges with many entities. They empower all to engage one another in solving problems and setting directions in ways that emphasize end values rather than individual subjective interests.¹⁷

Motivated by deeply held values and operating out of mutual trust, honor and respect, they exercise a sustained pro-active influence and have the ability to initiate far-reaching changes in structures and organizations.

Donna Markham adds another dimension to the transformational leader that is a spiritlinking quality. She writes:

As starlight's emitted energy is attracted toward solid mass, as the processes of sending forth and drawing toward form a dancing interplay in the cosmos, spiritlinking leaders spark that intrinsic connection between mission and collaboration, between goal-directed action and the formation of right and just relationships. These are the leaders who catalyze forces of human energy to be directed in service to the good that we share in common.¹⁸

¹⁶ Catherine Walsh, conversation with author, 8 Aug 1996.

¹⁷ Carey, 3 no 1:31.

¹⁸ Donna Markham, Spiritlinking Leadership: Working through Resistance to Organizational Change. (New York; Paulist Press, 1999), 136-37.

The ability to facilitate collaboration and participation is key for leadership of the future. Respectful of ideas, such leaders are inviting and trusting. They share in the spirit and vision of Celtic and feminist spirituality, welcoming all to the circle of inclusion and power.

Carey, citing two other authors, Burns and Bass, notes that transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation to change followers' perceptions and to strengthen their use of imagination and creativity in problem solving. Intellectual stimulation facilitates the followers' rethinking of situations with new insight.¹⁹ Leaders are perpetual learners, avid for new ideas and new ways of proceeding. One in particular comes to mind, who takes time off annually to study, and learn from others' experiences. This openness to learning sparks freshness and brings new life and energy back into the parish community. Furthermore, this leader understands the necessity of providing ministers with the education and resources needed for effective ministry. To this end, he supports and finances the ongoing education of parish team members.

The Celts were also aware that the mind is a human gift to be nourished and developed and the preservation of all learning was important to the Monastic communities. Indeed, monasteries were the schools and universities of the time with thousands of students from all over Europe. The symbol and meaning of

¹⁹ Carey, 3 no 1:31.

these centers of learning are a reminder of the need to engage in informational and formational learning processes.

Balancing logic and reason with music, song, poetry, art, the Celts believed that these, too, were tools of knowledge. Therefore, persons who would sustain creative spirited approaches to leadership can learn much from Celtic experiences and feminist perspectives. Timothy Joyce writes, "To follow the Celtic spiritual way we modern Christians will have to do a lot of 'soul work' to develop our unused imagination or neglected senses, to complement our rational minds."²⁰

In her book, The Female Advantage, Sally Helgesen asserts that, the ability to model and persuade, is of particular importance in a community where authenticity is not imposed from the top down in hierarchical fashion.²¹ She further suggests that in a structure where talent is nurtured and encouraged rather than commanded, and where a variety of interconnections exist, influence and persuasion take the place of order. The lines of authority are less defined, while more dependent upon a moral center. Compassion, empathy, inspiration and direction — all aspects of nurturance — are connective values, better communicated by voice, by tone, and then by vision.²²

²⁰ Joyce, 151.

²¹ Helgesen, 225.

²² Ibid.

This power to persuade and encourage persistence and commitment is essential. It allows the vision to withstand inevitable resistances and to slowly take root in the community. The ability to persuade is particularly important in times of transition when many feel vulnerable and unsure. Donna Markham wisely remarks:

Rooted and centered, these leaders have learned to make contact with and stay connected to their life-source along rocky, thorn-choked paths, fraught with often times exhausted situations. They know how to bend in grace and take well grounded purposeful action in the face of the winds of resistance, they captivate others to join them in creative solidarity as they keep watch on a distant and mysterious horizon.²³

Leaders who lead with such class are rooted in Spirit/Sophia – source of all energy. They know who they are, and where they are headed; even in times of uncertainty and confusion they remain at peace, trusting the spirit's guidance. Keleen Jamison, in her book The Nibble Theory describes such leaders. She writes:

What makes some people exciting, what makes people leaders, what makes them charismatic? It has something to do with energy, and an ability to call out and encourage risk in others. Why do students achieve with one teacher and not with another? Where does that energy come from? I believe it comes from people who are operating out of their

²³ Markham, Spiritlinking Leadership, 130.

kernel, who have got into touch with the very center of their being.²⁴

Connectedness to the center of one's being and to the kernel of one's life, is essential to sustaining energy that reaches out, invites and includes. Mother Teresa of Calcutta is a good example of such energy and influence. A woman of vision, she saw beyond pain and suffering and recognized God's presence in the midst of the pain. She was untiring in her effort to make the world a better place for the poor and helpless, and her trust was indomitable.

Like the prophets of the Hebrew scripture, participative inclusive leaders are voices of challenge. They call us to remember the past and dream a new future as they seek to listen to God's invitation in the present. Vatican II placed the Church directly in the midst of the world as an "advocate," "a voice" for all of humanity, especially the poor. Participating in the compassion of God, transformative leaders enter into solidarity with the suffering poor, the disenfranchised, the women, the earth; they take responsibility for creating a more just and equitable society, diocese, parish, and community. They challenge people to image and re-image creative ways of recognizing the stranger, the one in need, and to reach out in love and service. People must be loved into roundness, as the poem "Roundtabling" expresses:

²⁴ Kaleen Jamison, The Nibble Theory: The Kernel of Power (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 4.

They must be loved into roundness, where apart is spelled a part and the call is to the gathering.²⁵

To love people into roundness and to offer the vision, energy and challenge proposed for transformational leadership calls for a deepened spirituality.

We turn now to the spiritual challenges and possibilities. We live in a world of change, of new paradigms, a world of plenty and of poverty, of peace and violence, of polarization, of tension, of hope and fear. Joan Chittister points out that, "it is precisely when the life we are living begins to dry up and crumble in our hands, when what served to sustain us yesterday fails to work today, that God becomes a different kind of reality and sight becomes seeing."²⁶ At these moments people are challenged to call upon their spiritual resources and discover ways of relating to God and to the whole of reality, that leads to wholeness.

The presence of friends and mentors lends support along the way. Timothy Joyce points out that "Celtic Spirituality will not allow us to go it alone. It is never just between individuals and God. The community is important, for that is where I know who I am. I also need particular people to share my journey in a special way. The 'anamchara,' or soul friend is the one with whom I really come to know myself and my God."²⁷

²⁵ Lathrop, 5-8.

²⁶ Chittister, 11.

²⁷ Joyce, 156.

As leaders today search out directions toward the future, the role of "soul-friend" or spiritual guide becomes crucial in discernment processes. These one-on-one trusting relationships provide opportunity for listening, interpreting, clarifying, and sifting out movements of the spirit of light from those of darkness. These relationships enable people to integrate new pieces of wisdom as they move forward boldly to face new challenges.

A spirituality of the desert, of solitude and silence, calls leaders to reflection and prayerful discernment. The desert monks moved out to the edges of society, to quiet places. In prayer and contemplation they encountered the mystery of God "with us" and "beyond us." In the emptiness and starkness of the desert, they confronted the corners of their lives that needed healing, transformation, and liberation. Leaders today must learn from these great women and men and risk the emptiness, the barrenness, so that they too may be enlightened and refreshed for the journey.

The contemporary leader or leadership team may not be able to experience the physical desert; nevertheless, they are invited to create sacred space in their environment — a place of encounter with the holy. This sacred place may be a room, a garden, a walkway, a wooded area or the ocean; most important it is a place where they intentionally take time to enter into communion with God. Immersed in this sense of wonder and mystery, the spirit is revived and sent forth to illuminate the dark.

Feminist spirituality can be very helpful in drawing leaders of the future into a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence. Sallie McFague in her book, The Body of God: An Ecological Theology, visualizes the universe as the Body of God. She writes:

The image suggests that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, for God is the breath or spirit that gives life to the billions of different bodies that make up God's body. But God is also the source, power and goal of everything there is, for the creation depends utterly upon God.²⁸

McFague in fact weaves a unified vision of theology, joining body and soul, human and the path of nature, and God and the earth.

Playing off this metaphor, Robert M. Hamma, draws some helpful implications for restructuring leadership. He asserts that the image of the world as God's body can help us discover ourselves as part of creation. He describes the process:

It reminds us that we are but one form of life, one sacrament of God. It alters our hierarchical model of life on earth and cautions us against attitudes of domination or passivity toward the earth and its creatures. It leads us to ask, if the universe is God's body, how shall we treat it? With what reverence should we walk about in it?²⁹

²⁸ Sally McFague, The Body of God: An Ecological Theology (Minn:Fortress Press, 1993), 43.

²⁹ Robert M. Hamma Landscapes of the Soul: A Spirituality of Place (Notre Dame, Ind: Ave Maria Press, 1999), 144.

This wholistic approach to relationship with God, others, and the whole universe sustains participative, inclusive models of leadership. Ultimately it is the foundation from which innovative models emerge, are nurtured and grow to greatness. Without this anchoring the vision will not survive.

Transformational leaders who are grounded on a solid foundation of cherished spiritual values, will find the wisdom and the courage to dream, to image a different future, and to ask the "what if" questions. Inspired by such visionaries, parish structures and relationships will be transformed, and innovative leadership models will emerge holding promise for the Third Millennium.

Practical Conclusions

The wisdom gathered from the study of St. Monica's parish, woven with learnings from Celtic and Feminist spirituality, has led to several practical conclusions. Among them are:

- Parishes intent on change have much to learn from transformational leaders who infuse spirit and vision into the community.
- Celtic and feminist spirituality, rooted in experience and connected to all of creation have the potential to nurture and sustain transformational leaders.
- The development of a new paradigm of leadership calls for: (a) communication and dialogue, (b) sharing the vision, (c) educational and formational processes at all levels of the Archdiocese.

- Recognizing that the Catholic Church has hierarchical and charismatic elements, the challenge is to honor and balance both. We must recognize the authority of those who hold pastoral office within the Church without diminishing the value of those who recognize their call to shared leadership as it arises from Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
- An understanding of the transition process and skills for coping with transition are essential for parishes attempting to adopt new models of leadership.
- A very practical and necessary condition for new models of leadership is funding for education and the support of just salaries.
- Collaborative models of leadership must look outward and allow the circles of inclusion to expand and include the wealthy, the poor, the old, the young and the many cultures as well as the genders present in our faith communities.

Moving Toward the Vision

The promise of a participative, collaborative and inclusive parish leadership is exciting and motivates many to risk the unknown. Parishes such as St. Monica's instill hope and stretch people toward the possible. Still, there are obstacles to overcome. There are the fears of transition and the letting go of control and a desire to hold onto the the familiar. But the nudge to choose mission over

maintenance is strong, and the gospel vision of inclusivity and interconnectedness propels the community forward. Wisdom inherent in the stories and testimonies of prophets and saints, of Celtic and feminist literature, of parish leaders and others is both a source of encouragement and a force motivating new images. In the end, all are summoned to affirm that:

Inside of us
There is a wonderful spirit
Of freedom.³⁰

Drawing strength from this Spirit/Sophia at the heart of the community, the author believes that parish leadership will muster the energy and develop the skills to engage in the process of building participative, inclusive models of leadership which will better serve the needs of the church of the Third Millennium.

³⁰ Rupp, 61.

APPENDIX A

PARISH OBSERVATIONS

Physical Environment

1. What is the first impression created by the buildings, the grounds, and the location?
2. How is the parish space used by the Community for its own life and for service in the community?
3. What are the major symbols in the church and parish complex?

Relationships

1. How do parishioners connect with visitors and newcomers? How are they welcomed?
2. What kinds of communication take place in different locations? In different contexts? (such as worship, bible study groups, faith formation groups, young adult ministry)
3. How do people interact at informal times? Do they cluster around? Do they intermingle with different ages cultures, and so forth?

Liturgy and Worship

1. What is the community's involvement in worship services?
2. What kinds of rituals are used?
3. How is the community welcomed to Liturgy?
4. Describe the hospitality following dismissal, if any.

Ministry

1. **What kinds of ministries are provided?**
2. **Who is involved in the leadership of the ministries?**
3. **Who are the participants?**
4. **What roles and relationships are operative in the leadership team?**

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW OF LEADERSHIP PERSONS

1. **Recall your parish's story of leadership:**
 - A. What are some of the images/symbols of leadership that you experience?
 - B. What leadership structures are in place in your parish?
 - C. A good metaphor to describe your parish leadership team is . . . e.g., Does your parish leadership remind you of: (a) A baseball team, (b) Wild dogs, (c) Something else?
2. **Style of Leadership:**

Describe the style of leadership operative at your parish:

 - A. How would you describe your parish efforts at shared leadership? How are power and responsibility shared? How is authority and leadership understood?
 - B. Describe any current situation of team leadership in which you are involved? What is happening? Comment on the presence or absence of enablement and empowerment? How effective is the leadership?
 - C. How does the style of leadership exercised in your parish affect the ministries that flow from it. Tel the story of one/two of the ministry efforts at your parish.
 - D. How is the male/female partnership understood and exercised?
 - E. What ecclesiology/theology influences the leadership styles?
 - F. What spirituality supports the leadership exercised?

3. **Futuring:**
 - A. If you could re-image parish leadership, what would it look like?
 - B. What are the key issues and challenges facing parish leadership?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW WITH MEMBERS OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY

1. What are the gifts and strengths of your parish community?
2. What are your parish's most important values?
3. Describe the leadership you experience. What image does it invoke for you? How is authority and power exercised?
4. How does the quality and style of leadership affect the ministries? Describe the forms of male/female partnership, if any exist.
5. What hopes for the future do you have for your parish? How can leadership enable that to happen?

APPENDIX D

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Questions asked of the data as a way of probing different dimensions of leadership:

1. **What are the operative images by which leadership functions in the parishes studied?**
2. **How is male/female partnership understood and exercised?**
3. **How is authority understood and power exercised?**
4. **What relationships are operative in the team? In the parish community? Larger community?**
5. **What structures and activities support the operative style of leadership?**
6. **How do the ministries reflect the style of leadership operative in both parish situations?**
7. **What ecclesiology/theology influences the leadership styles?**
8. **What spirituality supports the leadership exercised?**

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